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## NEW FRONTIERS OF RELIGION



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NEW FRONTIERS  
OF  
RELIGION

The Church in a Changing Community

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11

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in Union Theological Seminary*

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## Preface

THERE ARE MANY approaches to the study of religion. Upon certain of them the theological seminaries have long concentrated their attention, offering courses in the history of religion, in the critical analysis of sacred scriptures, courses in ethics, in theology and the philosophy of religion and in comparative religions. More recently courses have been given in the psychology of religion including the methods and principles of religious education. Just fifty years ago, Emile Durkheim offered at the University of Bordeaux the first regularly accredited university course in sociology, the science of society based upon the collection and comparison of social facts. Since that time most of the leading universities of the world have followed suit. Although, in the seminaries, the teaching of Christian ethics has been deeply influenced by sociological theory and the teaching of the history of religion and of comparative religions somewhat influenced by it, none the less there has been no notable development of a sociology of religion comparable to that of the psychology of religion which followed the general acceptance of psychology as a university subject.

This is unfortunate but by no means strange. For it is true that sociology was early looked upon as a substitute for and a rival to religion in guiding man to the goal of the Good Society. Emile Durkheim began his teaching at the time of the inception of the Third Republic in France when the church and, therefore, religion, was identified with a discarded Empire and "a secular democracy . . . was the ideal toward which the Republicans strove."<sup>1</sup> Science, not revelation, was to be the source of enlightenment. And wherever, to-day, the old and false antithesis between science and religion remains unresolved, this same rivalry persists. It is by no means accidental that a large number of our leading sociologists are one-time ministers who, having repudiated the frequently quite narrow faith of their fathers, now find in

<sup>1</sup> Alpert, Harry, "France's First University Course in Sociology" (*Am. Sociological Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, June 1937), p. 312.



sociology the means of continuing to serve their fellows as self-appointed guides to the better way of life.

The modernist in religion who refuses to believe that the religious is the unpredictable, the chaotic and the lawless or that true revelation and true science can ever be at odds, finds sociology not a foe but a powerful ally and the sociology of religion an essential aspect of training for Christian leadership.

Reference to the author's use of the term "supernatural" is necessary at the outset, though in Chapter IX the matter is further discussed. Since to primitive man the concept of natural law was unknown there is a sense in which it is true that all events, the mundane agency of which was not apparent, were believed by him to be the result of supernatural forces. Indeed the supernatural was felt to be operative as one factor even in situations in which the chief agent was obviously tangible and "ordinary." Religion, and therefore the supernatural, permeated all of life.

With the development of the sciences and of the concept of natural law the necessity has arisen either to rule religion out of the category of events subject to analysis and generalization as law-abiding, or to include it on the assumption that the phenomena of religion are not different in kind but only in degree of measurability from the majority of those phenomena upon the analysis of the behaviors of which natural laws are based. The author takes this latter position. And unless the reference is clearly to the religions of primitive groups or to the primitive beliefs of certain so-called civilized groups, the term 'supernatural' as it occurs in the text, implies not that which is outside of all law, but rather that type and variety of phenomenon which involves or is judged to involve the operation of some attribute or aspect of a spiritual Reality, objective and within the range of scientific investigation though as yet but vaguely described in terms of known laws.

It is the aim of this book to give some indication of the nature and worth of the sociological approach to the study of religion. Let us, at the outset, frankly and fully recognize that this one approach cannot comprehend all of religion. Nor can any other. It remains incontrovertible that religion to be understood must be experienced. The same has been said of true love. Yet that fact

has not restrained poets, artists, authors and scientists from attempting its explanation and formulating its laws. Nor have their attempts altogether failed to make the experience of love both more enlightened and more enlightening.

The sociology of religion may be defined as the scientific study of the origins of religion as a social institution, its development, the varying forms it has assumed and the functions it has fulfilled with special reference to the scope and meaning of these functions in themselves and in relation to the functioning of other contemporary social institutions. In other words it is an effort to find out what in fact are the tangible social characteristics of those forms of organization which are called religious, how variously they began and grew and what differences they have made and are making in the social structure of which they are a very real part.

Though easy to formulate, this is quite obviously a colossal undertaking. The origins of religion are lost in the mists of pre-history. We are sure only that they are many and not one and that their earlier developments were likewise diverse. There is no regular sequence of growth, no series of stages through which, from simplest beginning, every religion has grown. There is only a baffling multiplicity of religious forms and practices and naive beliefs. Identical forms and practices spring often from widely divergent beliefs and, with like contrariety, identical beliefs lead to very different forms and practices. Pre-history has left few records. Scholars draw inferences upon them in terms of what they know, or think they know, of modern primitives, whose modes of feeling, thought and action have invariably been modified by civilization, yet not sufficiently so to make the anthropologist safe against the error of reading his own thoughts and feelings into the actions he observes.

Yet it is certainly far easier to study the religion of an isolated tribe of pre-literate folk than that of a modern city. Leaving aside all question of origins, who could describe with accuracy that vast conglomerate of forms and practices which constitutes the organized religion of the metropolis? Here the world's living religions jostle one another. Here throng the cults, both ancient and modern. Ghosts walk and talk and move heavy objects about, voodoo offers charms and incantations, the sick are healed by

faith, men and women "speak with tongues," drunkards are converted, the poor are reconciled to poverty and the rich to wealth, prayers are offered, sermons preached, and hymns sung, and in the "humanist churches" men and women find courage to live bravely and sacrificially in a world without ultimate meaning or goal, a world from which God has been politely but firmly excluded.

Furthermore who is adequate to unravel the intertwinings of religion with such other modern institutions as industry and finance, government, the family, the school and organized charity? Hard enough in a period of relative stability, it becomes all but impossible in an age of overwhelmingly rapid change.

The difficulty of a task is often the measure of its importance. Somehow, sometime it must be attempted and done—if not adequately then as adequately as possible. But fortunately we are not, in this brief volume, called upon to undertake it.

Instead we attempt in summary fashion to draw what conclusions we can as to the probable origins of religion as a social institution and the more basic patterns of its functioning in primitive societies as a foundation for a single and persistent inquiry: What is the relation between organized religion (especially Protestantism) and social change? And, for convenience, we divide this inquiry into two parts, the first dealing with the effect of change upon religion and the second with the effect of religion upon change. We then consider the opportunities which now confront the church for a more aggressive and effective participation in social education and action. And we deal at some length with the newer methods and programs by which this may be accomplished.

The author desires to express his indebtedness to the many students from many lands who through papers and discussions have contributed to his thinking upon the place and function of organized religion in life. To his friends in the ministry, former students who through twenty years have shared with him their perplexities and victories his debt is great. And to his colleagues in Union Seminary who through their writings and their fellowship have in some measure disciplined his thought and

broadened his experience he is humbly grateful. To his colleague, Dr. W. W. Rockwell, he is indebted for the reading and criticism of those chapters dealing with the history of the church. To Mrs. Wilma H. Slaughter for painstaking care in the typing of the manuscript, in the checking of references to other works, the reading of proof and the multitude of other tasks that go with the publication of books, the author expresses his gratitude.

ARTHUR L. SWIFT, JR.

New York City  
March 7, 1938



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## **PART I**

### **Basic Patterns of Religious Behavior**





## CHAPTER I

### The Church as a Social Institution

THE NATURAL ANTIPATHY between religion and sociology has led them to avoid each other. With certain notable exceptions<sup>1</sup> sociologists have paid scant attention to organized religion as a basic part of modern community life. Far from regretting this, the church has turned gladly to more orthodox sources of advice and information and has besides generally looked askance at even the most tactful of investigations launched under religious auspices. To this fact the most convincing testimony is found in the experience of the Institute of Social and Religious Research, which between 1922 and 1934, when it ceased to exist, "carried out forty-eight research projects published in seventy-eight volumes."<sup>2</sup> In its last and summary volume, *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution*, it is stated that "All told, then, resistance to the scientific study of the church from church sources has been thrown into relief as a major phenomenon by fourteen years of experience."<sup>3</sup>

In view of the high quality and great usefulness of the publications of the Institute, this statement calls for some adequate response from church leaders. Yet when Mr. Rockefeller withdrew his financial support, it was found impossible to secure from church sources sufficient funds to continue the Institute's existence upon any workable basis whatsoever. Clearly it is up to all liberal and enlightened churchmen to confess their shame of this complacency and prejudice and to pledge their support of a more enlightened and humble attitude. For, unquestionably, a great

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, Steiner, Jesse, *The American Community in Action*, Lynd, Robert S., and Helen, *Middletown and Middletown in Transition*.

<sup>2</sup> Douglass, H. Paul & Brunner, E. deS., *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (N. Y., Harper & Bros., 1935), p. v.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

deal of the church's hostility must be attributed to the unsavory nature of the facts disclosed.

"Probably no body of data ever assembled constitutes so staggering an indictment of the actual evils and futilities of current religious institutionalism as the Institute's studies of the American church."<sup>4</sup>

Loyal church members may well pause to search themselves for the causes of this indifference. Surely they can as individuals take criticism and profit by it. But it is a quite different thing to expect them to welcome criticism of the most sacred of their institutions, the Ark of their Salvation, the repository of divinely revealed truth, the mediator of God's Will to Man. Their argument, a familiar one, runs about as follows. No effort to measure the church with rule and calipers can be significant. The significance of the church is to be found only by those who have themselves experienced the central fact of worship, the communion of man with God in the fellowship of the saints. Buildings and equipment, budgets and finance, the community's unmet social needs, even the minister's education or lack of it—these are superficial.

That the church, theologically considered, is an institution apart, not comparable to other organizations, has always been central to the belief of the faithful. But it is high time to call a halt to the blind extremes to which this theory leads. Whatever else it may be, the church is a social institution with social duties to perform and social relations to establish and maintain. Neither its claim to divine authority nor its tendency to exclusiveness can excuse the ignorance and ineptitude of its social functioning. There is no good reason why godliness should be made an excuse for futility.

The church is both a communion of saints and a social institution. Without instrumentality there can be no functioning. An organization commissioned by so august an Authority is not on that account excused from the practice of simple though mundane efficiency. Indeed, it would seem incumbent upon it to prove itself at least as intelligent and as conscientious about the Lord's business as are those organizations devoted to the service of Mammon. It is true, "ye cannot serve God and Mammon." That

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.

does not necessitate the practice of slovenliness as proof of allegiance to God.

The necessity for corporate action survives any and every creed or theory as to the nature of the church and its relation to the world about it. In a later chapter is discussed the bearing of these varying theories upon the relation between church and state. But they do not in any fundamental way affect the soundness of the conclusion we have reached.

More intimate query as to the church member's personal reactions to scientific analysis of organized religion will reveal the likelihood of other difficulties. To search and probe, to weigh and measure is to imply that something radically needs changing. Religious loyalties, including loyalty to the organized church, are built into one's life through the early and precious associations of childhood and the home. It is as natural to resent implied criticism of one's religion as of one's family. The believer is prone to accept as the highest type of loyalty the full and complete acceptance of both. Yet reason counsels otherwise. "Blessed are the wounds of a friend." We are loyal to our country but recognize that that loyalty demands a critical awareness of her faults as well as of her virtues. To recognize that the church has often been at fault is not to question God's perfect goodness. It is to confess human fallibility. Especially must those whose careers are in the church be on guard against so identifying their personal fortunes with it as to be unwilling on their own account to have it criticized. This may seem an unnecessary precaution until we recall that in the church these men and women find the means of livelihood both for themselves and for their families and through it the means whereby they find self-expression and the opportunity to guide and influence other lives. The ethics of the scientist demands that he acknowledge his own bias. The loyal churchman can do no less.

Indeed, we can well go further to inquire what are the positive qualities and characteristics which science demands of its followers in their search after truth.

"The first, of course, is the possession of reasonable native ability, the qualities of the scientific mind, and common sense. . . . Essential also are a wide range of knowledge and training covering

a broad field; broad interests; the ability to work hard and rapidly; the love of hard work; the ability to work at, comprehend, and analyze more than one thing at a time, without losing the facility for concentrated attention; the selective faculty, with keen insight into the unexpected; the ability to pursue one subject to its logical end; facility in analysis, classification, and interpretation; facility in receiving censure as well as favor.”<sup>5</sup>

Surely those who claim allegiance to the God of Truth can find no fault with this compendium of virtues. A like objectivity, discernment and accuracy, a like appreciation of the value of censure would go far toward overcoming that resistance to scientific analysis still characteristic of the church.

In the chapters that follow there is an honest effort to get at the basic social facts about organized religion. This is done in the conviction that the church at its best is best served by the truth, that the great need of the church is for a leadership no longer blinded by a false conception of loyalty, but in the words of Clement of Alexandria “ready to take truth from any source, even from the devil himself,” and to use it in the service of God.

<sup>5</sup>Odum, Howard W., and Jocher, Katherine, *An Introduction to Social Research* (N. Y., Henry Holt and Co., 1929), p. 331.

## CHAPTER II

### Mana, Animatism and Animism

ANY EFFORT TO understand the relation between organized religion and social change necessitates not only an intelligent appreciation of scientific method but as well a clear-cut picture of that in religion which from the beginning has been most central, least modified by the accidents of time and circumstance. It is too easy to warp our analysis of religion as we observe and experience it to-day to fit the pattern we desire to find. The religion practiced around us is of so great a variety, has so many queer twists and strange anomalies as to make it hard to know by what central similarities it may be surely identified as religion at all.

In this chapter and in the two that follow it we seek to gain perspective, to discover what we can of how religion began and to see it in its lasting essentials, stripped of the complications with which modern society has decked it. We shall thus be able better to distinguish the enduring from the ephemeral and to study modern trends in religious practices in terms of their ancient prototypes as well as of their present implications.

Our ancestors of the bush and jungle, of sea-coast and mountain fastness lived lives so simple, so restricted, so lacking in the embellishments and impedimenta of civilization that it is almost impossible for us to feel kinship with them. For countless generations the struggle for life's bare necessities held them in thrall. Food, shelter, the satisfaction of sexual desires—for these they strove. Drawn together into horde, clan or tribe by their shared needs and the ties of blood relationship, they were hunters, herdsmen, tillers of the soil. And within each tribal group there grew through the accidents of experience an accepted pattern of behavior to which the individual conformed. Innovation was rare, change a matter of centuries. The individual was one with

his tribe. There was a unanimity of feeling, thought and action unparalleled in modern experience. Primitive man was in all his ways upheld and hemmed in by tradition. These facts led Emile Durkheim to conclude that religion is completely a product of the social group, in its essence simply that sense of reinforcement which individuals experience when they are part of a group lifted out of their narrow limitations and of their benumbing fears by an intruding power so real as to be worshipped and personalized.

Certainly it is true that religion wove itself in to tribal ways as essentially a part of the struggle for existence. As far back as the most ancient relics take us, the red of religion is in the pattern of life. And it was more than the inter-stimulation occurring in crowds. For many to-day a seeming non-essential, a frill to culture, it then belonged to life's essentials. The supernatural was more than myth and fancy. It was real, as real as hostile tribe, wild beast or raging torrent and as definitely to be reckoned with.

Lacking altogether the concept of natural law, primitive man struggled to live in the midst of a small but capricious world. So long as all went well he was little troubled to explain what took place about him. The customary, the expected, the predictable he accepted without question. The strange, the unexpected, the terrifying, the destructive, he was compelled to recognize and to combat. Not normal weather, but bitter drought and raging flood; not life, but birth and death; not sunlight and moonlight, but the waning and eclipse of sun and moon; not health, but disease; not plenty but starvation roused in him an awareness of forces whose outcomes he could not by ordinary means control. It was the terrible crises of life, its major accidents and misfortunes, not its normalities nor blessings which first stirred the imaginations of men to find solution for their bafflement and fear in actions and beliefs we have come to call religious.

Perhaps, despite our vaunted knowledge, we have not altogether outgrown this tendency. How many folk there are who turn to the church only in the major crises of life, to be married, to have their children baptized, to be comforted in serious illness, to be buried. And, too, there are those who, scarce knowing why, still feel impelled to attend church twice each year, at Christmas and at Easter, ancient pagan ceremonies of the winter solstice when

the sun all but loses its strength, and of the vernal equinox, the risen sun heralding the rebirth of vegetation and of all fertility.<sup>1</sup> Religion was, and in some measure remains a phenomenon of crisis.

Whatever he may afterward have thought about it, there can be little doubt that early man was moved to feelings of wonder and of awe when the lightning bolt struck the forest into flame, when the volcano erupted, when the earth quaked, or the sun's disc was blackened and the day grew suddenly dark. Surely in the emotional response to mysterious power there is something of the essence of religion. Both logic and psychology would seem to support those scholars who claim that in this experience religion had its origin. Not long ago a man and a boy climbed a mountain by moonlight. It was a long climb, and as they reached the top the moon, large and queerly warped, was setting in the west as, separated from it by the whole expanse of shadowed earth, the sun began to show its rim. There was silence until at last the boy spoke: "And yet there are those who say there is no God." He knew, as do we who have had similar experience, the meaning of what Goldenweiser calls "the religious thrill" which is "the fundamental emotional root of religion."<sup>2</sup>

These scholars believe that out of this experience of awe, oft repeated, grew an idea, a concept of a mysterious and wonder-working power which certain objects and individuals at certain times possessed. Codrington found this belief among the Melanesians. They called this power "mana." Since the publication of Codrington's book, that term has been used to describe this power wherever, in the beliefs of many widely scattered folk, it has been found to exist. It is important to our inquiry to note that although this concept falls within the realm of the supernatural it does not necessarily imply the existence and operation of spirits or ghosts. Though we, like the lad who climbed the mountain, might read God into the experience, yet the thrill of awe would precede and in a sense be independent of our spiritual interpretation of it. "Mana itself is not an animal or human being, nor a ghost or

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, Carpenter, Edward, *Pagan and Christian Creeds* (London, Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1920), pp. 28ff.

<sup>2</sup> Goldenweiser, A., *Early Civilization* (N. Y., Knopf, 1922), p. 201, footnote 1.



spirit, it is just power, magical potency. Although impersonal per se, it manifests itself with equal facility through natural objects or beings, through man, spirits or ghosts."<sup>3</sup>

Says Professor Otto: "'Religious dread' (or 'awe') . . . first begins to stir in the feeling of 'something uncanny,' 'erie' or 'weird.' It is this feeling which, emerging in the mind of primeval man, forms the starting-point for the entire religious development in history."<sup>4</sup>

There is great difficulty in making clear distinction between the idea of mana, a power possessed by something and the notion that that thing is itself alive, sentient, purposeful. Also it is by no means easy to be sure to what extent this idea of power which is mana can be identified with the idea of spirit. For an object or individual spirit-possessed is treated with much the same reverence and behaves in similar ways. Thus our discussion of mana has led us to two other concepts of religious origins, that of animatism which Marett<sup>5</sup> believes grows out of the mana concept and that of animism, the belief in spirits. Sumner and Keller,<sup>6</sup> Radin<sup>7</sup> and others contend that mana never exists apart from spirit possession.

A few illustrations will help to clarify the points at issue. From Angola, Portuguese West Africa, comes a female image, beautifully carved in wood. The medicine man used to set it up in the corner of his hut and while eager crowds waited in silence outside, perform before it a furious ritual of incantation, dancing, shaking his rattle, uttering words of power, until answering words came from the image. They were sounds unintelligible to the awe-inspired listeners without. But the medicine man interpreted them. The goddess whom the image represents had been summoned to possess her image. Through its lips she had spoken. "Ventriloquism," said the missionary who observed it, "but I am inclined to believe the medicine man was self-deceived by his own performance." Yet he found it easy to purchase the image for his collection for the spirit was independent of it, not concerned in its sale.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> Otto, Rudolf, *The Idea of the Holy* (London and N. Y., Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Marett, R. R., *The Threshold of Religion* (London, Methuen, 1909, 1st ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *The Science of Society*, Vol. II (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1927).

<sup>7</sup> Radin, P., in *Anthropology in North America* (N. Y., Stechert, 1915).

The Melanesians venerate certain stones. "The spirits belonging to these stones are nameless; their connexion with each its own stone is not clearly defined; the stone, they say, is not the body of the spirit, nor is the spirit like the soul of the stone, for a stone certainly has no soul; they say that the spirit is at the stone, . . . or near the stone, and it is the spirit not the stone that acts." <sup>8</sup>

"In the Bible the stone used by Jacob at Bethel, and anointed by him, was holy by reason of the vision vouchsafed him while it supported his head; the place was to him the 'house of God.' " (Gen., Ch. XXVIII.) <sup>9</sup>

Some years ago the author received from a Little Flower Shrine in New Jersey a communication and a holy medal. The letter said in part:—

"Of course you have heard about the Little Flower and the wonderful things she has done and continues to do for those who invoke her intercession. I am sure, too, that you will be pleased with the enclosed souvenir medal which has been touched by a true relic of this dear little Saint. . . .

"Innumerable favors have been granted to those who faithfully wear the medal enclosed and recite the little prayer in her honor. . . ."

Evidently this medal possesses mysterious power. Is it spirit possessed? In Catholic doctrine, certainly not,—but by contact with a sacred relic it too has been made sacred.

One day a medicine man from another section of Africa saw the little image of the Angola goddess, earlier mentioned, lying on a table in the author's home. He picked it up. As he did so, the muscles of his arm contracted and his body twisted as though an electric current were passing through him. Quickly he put it down, remarking, "It has great power, power I do not know how to control."

Whether voluntary or involuntary, it was quite impressive. But the point lies in the characteristic blurring of the distinction between a fetish object, at times spirit-possessed, and the same object, no longer the dwelling place of any ghost, but none the less, possessed of mana.

<sup>8</sup> Codrington, Robert H., *The Melanesians* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1891), p. 182.

<sup>9</sup> Sumner & Keller, *The Science of Society* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1927), Vol. II, p. 1021.

The Holy Bible is used to administer the oath of office to public servants and to "swear in" witnesses before courts of law. The bare hand must be placed upon the Book as the oath is taken. Even in so godless a generation as our own the Bible is as a rule handled with more respect than are ordinary books. Can it be possible that it possesses mana?

Perhaps the reader, though he may not have purchased a lucky ring or pendant, nor may he carry about with him the left hind foot of a rabbit, yet may hesitate to part with some coin he found or for some other "reason" cherishes as a pocket piece.

William James once had an encounter with an earthquake. This is what he has to say about it.

"When I departed from Harvard for Stanford University last December, almost the last good-bye I got was that of my old Californian friend B: 'I hope they'll give you a touch of earthquake while you're there, so that you may also become acquainted with that Californian institution.'

"Accordingly, when, lying awake at about half past five on the morning of April 18 in my little 'flat' on the campus of Stanford, I felt the bed begin to waggle, my first consciousness was one of gleeful recognition of the nature of the movement. 'By Jove,' I said to myself, 'here's B's old earthquake, after all!' And then, as it went crescendo, 'And a jolly good one it is, too!' I said.

"Sitting up involuntarily, and taking a kneeling position, I was thrown down on my face as it went *fortior*, shaking the room exactly as a terrier shakes a rat. Then everything that was on anything else slid onto the floor, over went bureau and chiffonier with a crash, as the *fortissimo* was reached; plaster cracked, an awful roaring noise seemed to fill the outer air, and in an instant all was still again, save the soft babble of human voices from far and near that soon began to make itself heard, as the inhabitants in costumes *negligés* in various degrees sought the greater safety of the street and yielded to the passionate desire for sympathetic communication. . . .

"As soon as I could think, I discovered retrospectively certain peculiar ways in which my consciousness had taken in the phenomenon. These ways were quite spontaneous, and, so to speak, inevitable and irresistible.

"First, I personified the earthquake as a permanent individual entity. . . . It stole in behind my back, and once inside the room, had me all to itself, and could manifest itself convincingly. Animus and intent were never more present in any human action, nor did any human activity ever more definitely point back to a living agent as its source and origin.

"All whom I consulted on the point agreed as to this feature in their experience. 'It expressed intention,' 'It was vicious,' 'It was bent on destruction,' 'It wanted to show its powers,' or what not. To me, it wanted simply to manifest the full meaning of its name. But what was this 'It'? To some, apparently a vague demonic power; to me an individualized being, B's earthquake, namely. . . .

"I realize now better than ever how inevitable were men's earlier mythologic versions of such catastrophes, and how artificial and against the grain of our spontaneous perceiving are the later habits into which science educates us. It was simply impossible for untutored men to take earthquakes into their minds as anything but supernatural warnings or retributions."<sup>10</sup>

Our illustrations began with a clear case of spirit-possession, proceeded by degrees through cases of the possession of a power definitely not associated with spirit at all and concluded with an example of a learned man's naive response to the apparent aliveness and purposiveness of a natural phenomenon. What conclusion shall we offer? This would seem safe.

Among the experiences in response to which religion arose were those many happenings which to the primitive observer were awe-inspiring by virtue of their unexpectedness, their immensity, their unusualness, their strangeness or their terribleness. Such happenings most often constituted crises in the lives of men, so that, by and large, primitive religion may be described as a phenomenon of crisis. The ideas which grew out of these occurrences, the thoughts they stimulated were various. Objects or individuals directly involved in these weird events were sometimes thought to be possessed by strange power; were sometimes thought to have an unusual quality of aliveness; were sometimes conceived to be, for the time being at least, the dwelling place of a spirit.

Which thought usually came first no one can surely know. Different authorities have considered each to be *the* origin of religion. We list them all among the potential origins. Then pause to note that when we wear a watch-charm, be it a rabbit's foot or a golden cross, we come close to the concept of mana. That when we loudly condemn and viciously shove aside a chair against which we have painfully collided in the dark, we act as though

<sup>10</sup> James, William, *Memories and Studies* (N. Y., Longmans, Green & Co., 1911), pp. 209-14.

the aliveness of non-sentient objects were a part of our belief. That when of a Sabbath morning we intone, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple" or of a dark night hurry past the graveyard, we might easily be misunderstood to believe that certain buildings and certain boxes in holes in the ground were, in a unique sense, spirit-possessed.

## The Fear and Worship of Ghosts

THERE HAVE BEEN many plausible surmises as to the kinds of experience which led primitive men to believe in the existence of spirits. That they are only surmises we must not forget. And we must be on guard against the unstated assumption upon which most of them are based—the assumption that spirits have no objective reality. Andrew Lang frankly faced this issue and was willing to admit it possible that civilization has dulled in man a keenness of perception which once was his.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps our pride of learning and our preoccupation with material things have closed the door to one great aspect of reality. Sir Oliver Lodge, W. S. Prince, Elwood Worcester, Sir William Barrett are among the many distinguished men who have publicly announced their belief in the reality of a spirit world. To these names might be added that of “Alfred Russell Wallace, co-discoverer with Darwin of evolution, . . . William Crookes, one of the greatest of British physicists,”<sup>2</sup> and Dr. James H. Hyslop, who resigned his chair in Columbia University to become secretary of the American Society for Psychical Research. These names are not quoted to offer proof of a reality which is commonly denied by sociologists. They prove nothing. They do point the fact that scientists of repute affirm the truth of what others tacitly assume is altogether false and foolish.

Ignoring even the possibility that religion may have originated in response to spiritual Reality, most sociologists seek to explain early man's belief in spirits in terms of natural but naive and faulty reasoning from experiences which to the trained mind present nothing unexplainable in terms of known law.

<sup>1</sup> Lang, Andrew, *The Making of Religion* (London, Longmans, Green, 2nd ed. 1900) p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Worcester, Elwood, *Life's Adventure* (N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 314.

The difference between a living man and a dead one must have been appalling, as indeed it still is.

“Rough and bent his still hands lie,  
Long an humble way he trod—  
Now he’s Awe and Majesty  
Second only to his God.”<sup>3</sup>

The breath left the body and did not return. And in many languages the same word is used for breath and spirit. In Hebrew it is *ruah*, in Greek *pneuma*, in Latin *spiritus*. God “formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”<sup>4</sup>

“Doubtless the invisibility and warmth of the breath, its thinness and evanescence as vapor, were taken into the conception of the soul.”<sup>5</sup>

The shadow which ever accompanied one, the image glimpsed in some quiet pool, the dream in which, though the body remained quiet, yet the dreamer travelled far, at times meeting and talking with those long dead, the trance, the epileptic seizure—all these contributed their share to the notion that man possessed a soul, which left his body at death. What then could be more inevitable than the conclusion that all strange and terrible and inexplicable things were done by spirits? The strong man who suddenly fell sick and died was surely the victim of some unseen spirit. Even drought and storm, the disappearance of game, the failure of the crop, human and animal infertility could be explained in terms of the spirits’ activities. Thus “there was unleashed a powerful force, comparable in its compulsions to hunger and love, namely, a fear of the supernatural or, to use a brief and distinctive term, ghost-fear. Now could the fearsome inexplicable be fear-somely explained. There was set afloat a tremendous major pre-mise gravid with dread deductions none of which over long ages were verifiable or even subject to critical examination by an awe-stricken and worshipful humanity.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ribton, C., *Release*, Living Age, August 28, 1926.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 2: 7.

<sup>5</sup> Sumner & Keller, *The Science of Society* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1927), Vol. II, p. 792.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 770.

As indicated in the preceding chapter, there are many "who attribute the origin of religion entirely to a belief in ghosts and souls of the dead and to the inference that the living also possess souls (often more than one) and are sometimes 'possessed' by the souls of the departed.

"The soul did not as a rule go at once to the land of the dead but haunted the house or the grave. Unless sent on its way with fitting gifts and ceremony it was likely to remain to do harm to those who had slighted it. Because it was not fitting that a chief or king should go into the other world unattended, his wives, his slaves, and even at times some of his warriors were slain at his grave that they might accompany him."

"It is true of many primitive peoples that the victims go willingly to death, in some instances contending for the honor. In India the practice of suttee has been hard to wipe out. In Japan at the death of the last emperor, Baron Ikeda committed suicide in order to follow his master."

"Many and perhaps all of our present mourning customs are survivals of remote stages of social evolution. At the funeral of a West Point cadet, recently killed in a football game, his horse draped in black with stirrups reversed was led in procession behind the casket by a negro soldier. At a Chinese funeral some years ago there was carried in procession through the streets a papier-mâché model of a Ford car. It was burned at the grave. . . . Thus China and America combine to memorialize the practice of funerary sacrifice. The horse is no longer slain at the American grave. The full-sized paper image of a more modern charger, the Ford car, is burned to provide means of transport to the departing Chinese soul."

Since we are concerned to note the extent to which ancient beliefs and practices persist into the present we would do well to remember that the belief in personal immortality remains a central tenet in the creeds of a vast majority of the religious organizations of our day. Almost invariably there is associated the belief in some form of communion or fellowship of the dead with the living. And not infrequently certain days are designated as periods within which that communion finds particular expression. In the Catholic Church All Souls' Day is thus designated and set apart for

<sup>7</sup> Swift, Arthur L., Jr., *Religion Today* (N. Y., Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1933), pp. 30, 31.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.



the commemoration of the faithful departed. It is based on the doctrine "that the souls of the faithful which at death have not been cleansed from venial sins, or have not atoned for past transgressions, cannot attain the Beatific Vision, and that they may be helped to do so by prayer and by the sacrifice of the mass."<sup>10</sup> The Catholic Church, however, definitely warns against the efforts of laymen to communicate with the dead as being both unwise and dangerous. Yet Spiritualism thrives and there are few communities where no groups sit to hold converse with departed spirits. Indeed there would be much justification for the conclusion that this form of behavior has from earliest times constituted a distinctive characteristic of religion.

In the United States about the middle of the last century there was a sudden resurgence of interest in this practice, resulting in the formation of Spiritualist churches.

"Beginning quite humbly in the small hamlet of Hydesville, upper New York State, in 1848, the movement has since grown until now a network of independent and affiliated Spiritualist churches spreads not only over the greater part of the United States and Europe, but over practically the entire civilized world."<sup>11</sup>

"According to the Census of Religious Bodies (1926), there were a total of 611 affiliated Spiritualist churches and societies in the United States at that time."<sup>12</sup>

The reported property value was \$1,384,156, and the membership 50,631. Spiritualism has a well-developed theology, which includes a doctrine of man as possessing "not only an immaterial spirit and a material body, . . . but, in addition, a soul (called also: soul-body, and spiritual body, i.e., body of the spirit);"<sup>13</sup> a doctrine of the spirit world as consisting "of a number of spheres or zones of 'spiritualized matter' which surround the earth like broad belts and are arranged in concentric order;"<sup>14</sup> and a doc-

<sup>10</sup> Article "All Souls' Day", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition, Vol. I, p. 709.

<sup>11</sup> Lawton, George, *The Drama of Life after Death* (N. Y., Henry Holt & Co., 1932), p. 135.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

trine of life in the spirit world as lived in each of the spheres or zones. The modes of this life are set forth with an explicitness that is amazing especially as to the third sphere, the Summerland, in which, according to Lawton, illumination, clothing, domestic animals, homes, social organization, occupations and the place and function of sex are all clearly described. This information is alleged to have "been obtained: by means of spiritual vision achieved in clairvoyant trance; by the communications of the spirits themselves, however transmitted; and finally, by means of the study and interpretation of spiritualistic phenomena."<sup>15</sup>

Many serious students of psychic phenomena make sharp distinction between Spiritualism and psychical research, claiming that the former is a religion, the latter a scientific investigation. There is in fact, however, no very great difference between the two. Many spiritualists, especially the professional mediums, seek the prestige gained by membership in a society for psychical research. And probably a vast majority of the "researchers" are convinced believers in the objective reality of communicating spirits. Yet it would not be fair on that account alone to discredit their experimentation. In the records both of the English Society, founded in 1882, and of the American Society, founded in 1885, there is much deserving of serious consideration.

The phenomena investigated are of two general types, physical and mental. In the former there is an alleged application of spirit force to material objects; in the latter it is claimed that a great variety of knowledge is imparted to the living from the dead. The physical phenomena, which are very numerous, might be classified as involving: the sound of knocking on walls and floor; the blowing of cold spirit breezes within a tightly closed room causing a thermometer to register a fall of several degrees in temperature; the moving about and levitation of material objects by non-human agencies; and at times their introduction into or removal from enclosed spaces allowing of no entrance or exit by normal means. Also there are said to occur ectoplasmic materializations of the departed which in appearance closely resemble the ghosts of story and fable, and, likewise a part of many ghost stories, the gleam of spirit lights and the sound of spirit voices. It is claimed that

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

the ectoplasm out of which these forms build themselves up is an exudation from the mucous membrane of the medium, is highly sensitive to light and is drawn again into the medium's body. These forms, however constituted, have been seen, felt and photographed repeatedly. They would seem to differ from the ghosts that haunt house, castle, and grave-yard in their dependence upon the medium and in the readiness with which among living friends they converse on matters both weighty and trivial and lend their efforts to the production of phenomena aimed to convince even the most skeptical.

Thus it becomes apparent that in many instances the physical and mental are combined in a single demonstration. Rapping on the wall is used as a means of communication. Also the spirit voice lectures upon a variety of subjects or answers the direct questions of those in the seance room. Table tipping, ouija board and automatic writing are claimed to be manifestations of the action of spiritual force upon material objects. But in these instances living folk are the apparent movers of table, planchette and pencil. The attempt to prove the spirit source of these activities is based upon the messages secured rather than upon the means used to get them. This is likewise true of dreams and visions, warnings and premonitions and of voices audible to one person only. These communications, it is claimed, prove the validity of the belief in the agency of spirits, for the knowledge imparted, be it of the past, the present or the future, is very often of a sort not obtainable by normal means.

Between 1926 and 1935 a serious effort was made for the first time to analyze and check a long series of mediumistic sittings under conditions which seemed to preclude the operation of fraud and to make very unlikely any "normal" explanation of the possession by the different mediums of the knowledge they imparted while in trance.<sup>16</sup> It is significant of the increasing "respectability" of investigation in this field that this particular research has been made the basis of a doctoral dissertation at Duke University and is published under the aegis of the University's Department of Psychology with a foreword by Professor William McDougall.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, John F., *Beyond Normal Cognition* (Boston, Bruce Humphries, 1937).

The author, Dr. John F. Thomas, has conducted, or had conducted for him, experiments with twenty-two different "sensitives" in 525 "sittings" in England and America during which 3,792 typed pages of records were procured. The present book contains an analysis of a series of twenty-four experiments with Mrs. Leonard in England, and includes as well an analysis of the corroborative and complementary data secured from other sensitives.

"In the Leonard records, there are 550 topics, with 2,964 points; a point being the statement of a single possibly verifiable fact. These 2,964 points score as 2,358 correct; 196 incorrect; 231 inconclusive; 179 unverifiable. The percent correct of the total points is 79.5%. The percent correct of the total verifiable points is 92.3%." <sup>17</sup>

It is very apparent that Dr. Thomas believes that these percentages can be fully explained only on the hypothesis that spiritual beings have actually communicated with living individuals. The evidence is very impressive. He does, however, give serious consideration to the possibility that the quite remarkable knowledge shown of past and contemporaneous events in his own life might have been secured by the medium through super-normal means not involving the spirit hypothesis. <sup>18</sup>

This raises an issue of grave importance to the future of mankind and of religion. Is man as strictly limited as he seems by space and time in the range of his perceptions? In 1927 J. W. Dunne published a book called *An Experiment with Time* which "offers extensive and rather convincing evidence that his dreams have dealt with the future as well as the past, and that other persons who were willing to follow his technique also found unmistakable traces of the future in their dreams." <sup>19</sup>

About 1930 Dr. J. B. Rhine, a graduate student of Duke University was encouraged by the Department of Psychology there to pursue certain studies in telepathy and clairvoyance. In 1934 he published the results of his research, *Extra-Sensory Perception*, following it in 1937 with *New Frontiers of the Mind*, a more

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter IX.

<sup>19</sup> Hart, Hornell, "Religion and Psychical Research" in *Religion Today* (N. Y., Whittlesey House, 1933), A. L. Swift, Jr., Ed., p. 224.

popularly written exposition of the same experiments and their amplification. Using a special pack of twenty-five cards of five suits of five cards each, he has, in several hundred thousand runs of the cards discovered that certain individuals have powers of extra-sensory perception since, without seeing the faces of the cards, they can name them with a degree of correctness so high as altogether to rule out the operation of chance as the explanation of their performance. This they accomplish in one of two ways, while a second individual looks at the face of each card in turn or while the cards remain face down upon the table. The first is an instance of telepathy, the second of clairvoyance. Those who possess the one ability as a rule possess the other also. Both types of experiment have been performed with marked success at a distance from the cards. In one series of 200 tests in telepathy the distance was over 250 miles and the correct answers averaged 10.1 out of a possible twenty-five, whereas chance would allow only five out of twenty-five on the average.<sup>20</sup>

These results have been verified by other independent investigators in psychological laboratories in various parts of the country. No satisfying explanation has as yet been offered. None the less the facts as stated seem to have survived every attack upon them. It may well be that in the experiments of Mr. Dunne and of Dr. Rhine we have the first definite challenge to prevailing conceptions of man's mental limitations and so of his place and function in the universe. Their influence upon religion is hard to foresee save by the means they advertise. Belief in the existence of the souls of the dead, spirit communication, vision and prophecy, intuition and mystic revelation all are involved.

Thus man's search for truth in this realm once dark with foreboding and until recently shunned by the average scientist as undeserving of his notice, enters upon a phase which promises new light upon old mysteries, perhaps the confirmation of the reality of spirit beings, more likely the laying of ghosts, in part at least, through the discovery that man possesses powers of which he has not been fully aware, powers which in some measure free him from his imprisonment in space and time.

<sup>20</sup> Rhine, J. B., *Extra-Sensory Perception* (Boston Society for Psychic Research, 1934), p. 105. The score of 10.1 per 25 is 10.8 times the probable error.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Worship of Nature. The Power of Magic

THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS have perhaps strengthened our realization of the extent to which primitive religious beliefs and practices have persisted through all the changes which time has wrought in the structure and content of the world's varied cultures. Mana, animatism and animism, the cult of the living dead, still weave themselves into the pattern of existence, still demand the serious study of those who would understand the social meaning of religion in our day.

Other strands appear which likewise run back into antiquity. Of these one stands out in the pattern almost as vividly as does the worship of ghosts. It is the worship of nature, its grandeur, its mystery, its power, its ever-recurring fertility. Another, made up of black and white, weaves backward through the pattern until toward the dim beginnings of the design its separateness is lost in the merging of the strands. It is magic, a part of man's long experience with the supernatural and therefore demanding our attention, though some scholars refuse to consider it a phase of religion at all.

Those who agree with Tyler and Spencer that a belief in ghosts of the dead forms the beginning of all religion, find in nature-worship merely a developed aspect of that belief. Nature is worshipped only as ghosts of the dead are thought to have come to dwell in natural objects. In Africa trees are worshipped because "the dead are laid away in the woods."<sup>1</sup> "There is enough evidence concerning the fetish-quality of animals which eat or are supposed to eat the flesh of men to warrant the inference . . . that connection with the ghost is at least one of the prime reasons for that quality."<sup>2</sup> "Lippert thinks that the sea and rivers became

<sup>1</sup> Sumner & Keller, *The Science of Society* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1927), Vol. II, p. 989.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 990.

fetishes from the custom of throwing corpses into them.”<sup>3</sup> “That fire may become a fetish in a country where cremation is practiced can be easily understood.”<sup>4</sup>

But it seems altogether likely that many objects in nature, such as the sun and moon, fire, rivers, and trees, were considered not always as the dwelling-place of souls once human, but often as possessing souls of their own. Or perhaps more simply, as with William James’ earthquake, they were believed to be alive and sentient like man himself.

There are two vast groups of nature deities, those of the sky and those of the earth. There are gods of the sun and moon, of stars and storm, of wind and rain, of dawn and darkness; gods of the bull and bear and all manner of animals, of river and lake and mountain, of rock and ravine and good brown earth, of corn and of wheat, of tree and of vine. Among all the forces in nature which, operating in and through these objects, impressed themselves upon man, none was more important than fertility, the power that brought increase and upon which his very existence depended.

“In the life of early man as he shifted from hunting to agriculture this feeling of dependence on the fruitfulness of the earth became the ultimate religious expression of the profound change in his manner of life. The imperishable life of the fruitful earth, which died and ever rose again many times multiplied, was personified as a dying and ever rising god.”<sup>5</sup>

The bull, the goat, the rabbit by their ardent sexuality came to symbolize fertility as the latter does to this day at Easter time. Jane Harrison believes<sup>6</sup> that Dionysos, the Bull-god of ancient Thrace, was the result rather than the cause of the yearly sacrifice of the bull, symbol of fertility. For, year after year, a bull in the prime of his strength was led about the houses and the fields, then ceremonially slain and later his hide was stuffed and stood erect to symbolize his resurrection. What more natural than that a bull-god should come into being to explain these regular re-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 989.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Breasted, James H., *The Dawn of Conscience* (N. Y.; London, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1933), p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> *Ancient Art and Ritual* (N. Y., Henry Holt and Co., 1913).

appearances and to give assurance of his continuing life? So Bacchus, god of the vine, was but the personification of the divine madness hidden in the juice of the grape. And, in like manner, Artemis was the personalized power of the mugwort, while Aphrodite was the power resident in the mandrake plant in the days when the medicinal properties of plants led to their worship as divine beings.<sup>7</sup>

The orgiastic rites of the nature religions, the mystery cults, were in essence but efforts to celebrate fertility and, by example, to stimulate it in nature. Christianity with its God who died and was buried and rose again, might have been no more than one of these cults had its Savior not been worshipped as the Son of the righteous and holy God of the Hebrews.

Man glorified the principle of life, the joy of sex and the miracle of increase. Surely it is not strange or perverse in itself that this great power in nature and in man should have been personalized and worshipped in countless gods and goddesses of love. Primitive man did not feel, as we do, that he must subjugate Nature. Instead he tried humbly to aid her and, indeed, felt his aid necessary.

"When men cease the old ways and no longer bring in the seasons with feasting and song, then darkness will come upon the Earth and fruits wither within the seed."<sup>8</sup>

There is an immediacy and directness about this relation between nature and man which have power still to stir the heart. The modern city-dweller has denied his birthright but his Mother, the Earth, has not surrendered her hold of him. Each spring time she troubles him with memories that brick and asphalt cannot shut out. So, for years unnumbered, men and women have roused to share with nature the victory of warmth over cold, of moisture over drought, of light over darkness, of verdure over barrenness, of life over death.

According to Margaret Alice Murray,<sup>9</sup> witchcraft as it was prac-

<sup>7</sup> Vide, Harris, James Rendel, *The Origin of the Cult of Artemis* (London; N. Y., Longmans, Green & Co., 1916); *The Origin of the Cult of Aphrodite* (London; N. Y., Longmans, Green & Co., 1916).

<sup>8</sup> Sperry, Margaret, *Sun-Way* (N. Y., Charles Boni Paper Books, 1930), p. 48, the words of a Swedish peasant whose way of thought "was the old way of her ancestors."

<sup>9</sup> *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921).



ticed in western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the persisting remnant of an ardent nature religion, whose faithful worshipped a god of fertility, though Christians dubbed him devil, a god whom they loyally and dangerously served and a god for whom they gladly died, at once witches and martyrs burned at the stake. For that same ambivalence that makes the sacred to be feared puts the curse of barrenness within the power of fertility's god. By the drying up of cattle, the withering and blasting of crops, by every form of sexual impotence and infertility did this devil-god of witchcraft inflict the Christian people, while his devotees were known to indulge themselves in orgies of the witches' sabbath, mad rituals of license and debauchery, exalting the joy and mystery of sex. It was no accident that Christians should make war on such as these. Centuries earlier, the Church Fathers, seeking to cleanse their cult from the orgiastic practices of Greek mystery religions which in other ways it so closely resembled, thundered against the evils of sex and exalted the virtue of chastity.

Nature worship merges with magic in the prayers, the incantations and rituals which seek to control the force and the fruit of love. And magic remains a belief and a practice so prevalent as to demand consideration in the study of the religious life of the modern community. Love potions still are brewed, love charms bought and sold and dark powers are released by incantation in the very midst of metropolitan sophistication. In Negro Harlem the "herbs" used to curse or cure in the West Indies and in far-off Africa are for sale, advertised in neon lights and the "conjur-man," the "voodoo-doctor" and "obeah-man" practice the arts of magic in defiance of modern law or by arrangement with certain of its representatives.

Magic, like religion is, in practice, a way of dealing with supernatural power. But it differs from religion both in the prevalent conception of the nature of that power and in the customary modes of dealing with it. Religion has to do with spiritual beings whose responses are no more certain and predictable than those of most people. Indeed a certain illogic and whimsicality are considered the usual attributes of the greater gods. Worshipers may know what generally will please or anger deity but they can never

be sure of the mood in which they may on occasion find him. Magic deals with powers impersonal and therefore predictable. Indeed they are predictable to a degree which identifies them more truly with our modern notion of natural law than with the responses of any personal deity. Sir James G. Frazer considers magic on this account the forerunner of science. Yet it might just as credibly be maintained that magic represents man's first dim apprehension of a god in whom there is "no variableness nor shadow of turning," of a god whose behavior is self-consistent, of a god who may be depended upon always to do his part. True as this is, it does not dispose of the fact that magic is not like religion an appeal to power but, like the operation of some chemical formula, a release of power under conditions which make that release inevitable. The magician is one who knows the formula. So magic stresses the implements, the means whereby certain power is released. To know them and their proper use is to possess that power,—a power that differs from mana because it belongs only to magicians and because it invariably responds to the proper ritual (or formula).

Magic like religion may operate in every phase of life in which it becomes desirable to use supernatural means to modify outcomes. But where religion appeals and supplicates, magic coerces and compels. Although as in religion the ends sought by magic may be socially desirable, magic, more largely than religion, deals with individual desires, jealousies and fears. Religion is more often practiced by an entire group and openly. Magic is the means sought after in secret by the lover who would defeat his rival, the feudist who would destroy his foe, or, free of all malice, is sought by the wife who would bear a son, by the huntsman who would bring back food to the empty larder. It has been said that magic deals with impersonal power, religion with spiritual beings. But this needs qualification. For the power of magic is often exercised to coerce spirits into doing the will of the conjurer. So, as with Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, the magician becomes, within certain limits, the commander and ruler of ghosts and demons, and the power he commands is in fact both impersonal and personal. But the latter is made possible by the former.

Magic seems in part to have arisen out of the naive notion that

that which in nature threatens man's well-being or existence can itself be threatened and coerced. The earthquake can be stilled by beating the earth with rods.<sup>10</sup> And, in like fashion, rain, long withheld, can be made to fall through the elaborate ritual of the Hopi snake dance. In much the same way a shaman, witch-doctor or sorcerer, may by the force of an evil will send some malady to torture a chosen victim. As he pierces with a thorn the belly of a small waxen image of his foe, he curses him and wills that pain shall twist his entrails.<sup>11</sup>

But this illustration introduces another element into the situation, that of magic by imitation. So rain is often produced by the scattering of water or of blood over the soil in simulation of rain. And so, as earlier indicated, Nature is moved to fertility by example in orgiastic rites. In like manner here, as the image resembles the victim, so the sharp thrust of the thorn resembles the pain which must pierce him.

To the magic of the coercive will and the magic of imitation, must be added the magic of contagion and that of relationship in time. Contagious magic identifies the individual with that which has been intimately a part of him—nail-parings, spittle, a bone from which he has gnawed the meat, even the print of his foot in the sand or the secret name which is given him at initiation. With such articles in his possession a sorcerer is equipped to bring disease and death to their quondam owners, who on that account are both more cautious and more cleanly than might otherwise be expected.

So also, on the constructive side, the mane of a lion, or the skin of a tiger, bring courage or strength to warriors in battle and the blood of the bull, poured upon the ground, insures a fertile soil. By much the same sort of reasoning that which precedes, accompanies or follows a given act or occurrence is sometimes felt to be magically related to it. The starving hunter who, just after he had picked up an oddly shaped stone, found game, would never again hunt without carrying that stone. The modern autoist who usually carried a St. Christopher's medal in his car, on the day in which he forgot it had a serious accident. He was very sure

<sup>10</sup> Cf., Sumner & Keller, *The Science of Society*, Vol. II, p. 761.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 1308-9.

he knew the reason. The primitive warrior, wounded by an arrow, pours water upon the arrow-head to cool the wound,—a retroactive magic in which the time-relation is reversed.

So varied are the manifestations of magic from earliest times to the present that no brief analysis can do justice to its many forms. On the one hand it merges with the concept of mana, for the lion's mane and the bull's blood might be said to possess it, and the oddly shaped stone is not unlike the "lucky coin" perhaps lying in the reader's pocket. On the other hand magic fuses with religion, for the magical incantation may be no more than an appeal to some god and the prayer though addressed to deity may be coercive of deity itself<sup>12</sup> or like the Mizpah benediction, "The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from the other," it may be a conditional curse automatically released upon any who should prove faithless.

Like mana and the worship of spirits, magic is touched with the awesome strangeness of the supernatural. Like religion it serves both as an explanation of many otherwise 'inexplicable' happenings and as itself a means of manipulating supernatural power. For the magician it has always been profitable to increase in the people the fear of magic arts when practiced against them. For magic must be used to combat magic and fear drives a generous bargain.<sup>13</sup>

From the viewpoint of the priest in those more developed civilizations in which religion and magic are become relatively distinct, magic has always been a foe to religion. For it is not as in religion an open appeal to the gods in humility and hope, but a secret coercion of gods and of men, harsh and unyielding, formed in hate and pride. Though it is not easy to believe with Frazer that men turned to religion only after they had been humbled by the futility of their magic to impress their will upon a hostile world, one sees the inevitable conflict between the two even as one recognizes the close resemblance each bears to the other.

<sup>12</sup> *Vide*, Lowie, R. H., *Primitive Religion* (N. Y., Boni & Liveright, 1924), pp. 4-7 for illustration of coercion in the prayers of the Crow Indians.

<sup>13</sup> *Vide*, Radin, Paul, *Primitive Religion* (N. Y., Viking Press, 1937), Chap. III, The Economic Determinants, pp. 40-58.

## CHAPTER V

### Aspects That Have Endured

IN PRECEDING CHAPTERS we have traced the basic patterns of religion in primitive societies, noting the many close resemblances to the religious behaviors of our day. Since our major concern is with the relation between religion and social change, we have felt it important not only to discover what in its essence and denuded of modern trappings religion is, but also to sense the centrality of religion in primitive life and its intimate association with every situation of crisis, and especially with phenomena of every sort which are incomprehensible, mysterious, awe-inspiring and therefore uncontrollable by normal means.

Were we to attempt a definition of religion based entirely upon these facts of primitive belief and practice we should have to say that religion was a belief in the supernatural and a way of dealing with it. That belief had its origin in man's awareness of powers, both harmful and helpful in objects and phenomena of nature and invisible, "in the very air." He reacted to them in a great variety of ways. These gave rise to two vast forms of religion—though the dividing line between them is indistinct—the worship of ghosts and the worship of nature. And interwoven with both is the practice of magic.

We find everywhere a fusing and mingling of concepts:—powers impersonal and personal, powers of nature, powers in nature, undervived and derived from the spirits of departed men and women, and through all a sense of the presence of that which is supernatural, the *mysterium tremendum*, terrible in its will to harm and to destroy, marvelous though whimsical in its benefactions,—a Great Reality in a multiplicity of forms and guises. And try as we may to explain it away by reason, to laugh away its absurdities, to condemn its dark cruelties, it remains in the experience of a million million witnesses none the less real, a portentous Fact,

not the mere creation of man's mind and heart, the wanton foolishness of the race's childhood, but a Fact more significant than any other fact whatsoever.

All the paraphernalia of religion have grown out of man's effort to deal with this Reality:—prayer and ritual, the dance, music, drama, sacrifice, tombs, temples, altars, images and symbols and priestly dress, a vast priesthood, theologies and mythologies beyond number and a confusing variety of beliefs and practices. All these are based upon the real or assumed relation of religion to every phase of life—birth, marriage, death, fighting, hunting, planting, herding, bartering, adventuring, cooking, eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, sneezing, breathing, washing, weaving, carving, and the making of pottery, so that it is hard to tell where religion leaves off and mundane existence goes on without it. For there was a realm of the sacred and a realm of the profane as Malinowski found in the Trobriand Islands. But it is important to realize this—the realms did not serve to isolate, as the exclusive property of one or the other, whole areas of human activity and interest. At present business is business and religion largely an affair of Sunday. In primitive societies business was both business and religion. Every activity and concern of life had its religious aspect.

Gods and spirits were omnipresent and exacting. In the sense in which it was felt desirable to avoid their anger or to win their approval, religion has always been concerned to shun evil and do good. But it is vitally important to realize that morality as such had no relation to the religion of the more primitive folk. The moral code and the religious were both evolved out of necessity, were both concerned with the preservation of goods and values in the face of all that threatened them. But the spirits, like hostile tribesmen, often made demands that were destructive of moral values and goods. True, it paid in the long run to be obedient. That was because men were merely men and gods were gods.

If one conceives of the world of the supernatural as existing independent of man—and primitives thus conceived it, then many actions, moral or immoral, might be required for no other reason than that the gods are believed to demand it. Many religious ceremonials and behaviors originated not in the conviction that

in themselves they served the welfare of the tribe, for they were often inimical as in the sacrifice of food and other possessions and of life itself, but in the conviction that they were required by the gods who, if they were not performed, would take vengeance. The immolation of widows and slaves of a departed chief was socially harmful but required lest his spirit return to take vengeance upon the entire tribe for the neglect of it.

If the gods you worshipped were conceived to be malign, temperamental, jealous, and arbitrary, possessed of common human weaknesses and desires, your behavior in relation to them would not raise the issue of morality or immorality but would be placative, conciliatory, motivated by fear and the desire to appease.

So in the Trobriand Islands the planting of yams must be accompanied by certain activities which prepare the soil to receive them. In the same way the garden ritual must be performed. One set of actions deals with mundane, the other with spiritual, powers. Both are addressed to the same end, the growing of yams. Both are necessary. To fail to perform either one of them would be wasteful and therefore wrong. Only in this sense is a moral issue involved.

Both morality and religion are the fruit of experience in wilderness and garden, in the hunt and on the war-path. But they arise from separate and distinct types of experience. "It seems to me to be a fact beyond dispute that the moral consciousness has originated in emotions entirely different from that feeling of uncanniness and mystery which first led to the belief in supernatural beings."<sup>1</sup>

In two chief ways religion and morals became identified one with the other, through the use of divine sanctions to reinforce the will of the majority or of the powerful, and through the projection upon the gods of those attributes and qualities most respected among men. Granting that the idea of right and wrong was not synonymous with that which pleased or displeased the gods and that serving the gods was primarily a matter of dealing with arbitrary, non-moral forces present and real and threatening, it still remains true that this two-way relationship inevitably

<sup>1</sup> Westermarck, Edward, *Early Beliefs and Their Social Influence* (London, Macmillan Co., 1932), p. 23.

developed. In those early times when ruler and priest were one, leaders recognized and used the power of supernatural sanctions and tabus to enforce certain desired and perhaps desirable modes of behavior. Also, as man's sensitivity to the sufferings of others increased, extending beyond the family to clan and tribe and foreigner, he was bound to modify his conception of the nature and character of his gods. The God of Isaiah or of Jeremiah is, in this sense, a projection in cosmic terms of the social and humanitarian insights of these prophets. Yet to say that man invariably interprets God's will to suit his own convenience or necessity and that by attributing to God his best moral insights, he makes God in his own image are but easy evasions of the age-old claim that God exists and is objectively real. That therefore his Will is real and not the mere shadow of man's desires, and that the revelation of that Will through prophets, seers and mystics shapes human destiny. What, then, of the many sad disservices to mankind that have been performed as of divine command? Is God's Will hard to understand aright? Are there, perchance, evil wills active in the strange realm of the spirit? Or is man self-beguiled by the cosmic magnification of his scruples?

Whatever may be the answer to this ultimate riddle, it is incontrovertibly true that among the great masses of the people over all the world, even among the learned and sophisticated in their hours of crisis, the realm of spirit remains real and actual though dimmed and dwarfed a little by the splendid structures of a material civilization. Whatever the riddle's solution, the fact remains that religion is man's belief in the supernatural and his methods of dealing with it. Primitive man dealt with it not alone in times of crisis, though it was through crises that supernatural power first impressed itself upon him. He dealt with it as a part of every aspect of his life, always striving through some ritualistic act to control it in his own interest. Not law but luck ruled his life. Cause and effect in invariable sequence formed but a small part of his experience. So often something was interposed between planting and harvesting, between loosing the weapon and killing the game, between all manner of contriving and reaching the goal. For these accidents of chance the gods and spirits were blamed, or the more impersonal force of magic. Therefore these powers



must be placated, appeased, and satisfied or they must be compelled and coerced, else life could not be lived. It is said that, more than by any missionary education, the North American Indians were robbed of their faith in ancestral gods by the white settlers' success in growing grain without the use of any ceremonial at planting.

We elsewhere discuss the fundamental significance for religion of the concept of universal law.<sup>2</sup> It is sufficient here to point out that were it accepted completely both intellectually and emotionally, it would remove all necessity of appeal to divine Power to modify outcomes in the interest of the suppliant save in those situations in which human beings were operative factors. For example, prayers for the successful outcome of a surgical operation might conceivably result in increasing the resistance of the patient or in heightening the surgeon's awareness or in steadying his hand. If the Godhead be conceived as personal, then the relations between man and God should be found to obey the laws that govern personal relationships and under those laws man of his own will might become the means or instrument through which Divine Power would operate as a determinative factor in a social situation. On the other hand, prayers for rain, still on occasion heard even in the nation's capital, would be no longer defensible. For it is assumed that God is, in a sense, the agency operating through merely natural phenomena and that therefore he would not contradict himself by thus upsetting the natural law which governs the weather and all its changes.

Yet not only is God's aid sought in the naive assurance that he who made the laws will break them, but the scientist is clothed with the same divine inconsequence and honored in much the same way as in days long gone was the witch-doctor for his most novel miracles.

In other words, the so-called scientific attitude is as yet no more than superficial. The mind of the average man is responsive to the miraculous. And he who can work miracles, be he in priestly robes or in laboratory linens, is to be revered as one who has intercourse with the mysterious. Religion to-day is not fundamentally different from its primitive forms. Man is, in the

<sup>2</sup> *Vide*, pp. 61-64.

depth of his being, still mazed in mystery. He still believes that there is a Power which rules his destinies. He is less afraid of it than were his remoter ancestors. And he seems less dependent on it than they. He makes more infrequent use of the coercive methods of magic. Therefore he might be said to be less superstitious. There is in his behavior more of fellowship with the divine, less grovelling and less humility. But religion remains man's belief in a Power greater than he and usually personal and man's effort to control that Power to his advantage. Religion is gratitude for favors granted and it is anticipation of favors to come. It is communion which may rise to the heights of mystic experience. It is a search for security, both in life and beyond the grave.

Yet to conclude that religion has remained unchanged through the changing centuries is obviously wrong. It has changed both in structure and function though its central core is unaltered. It must be our task to trace the major steps in this process, not by a survey of religions through all recorded history, but, more simply, by a study of the organized church, and especially of Protestantism in this country. Nor can this lesser task be made as comprehensive as would be a history of Protestantism in the United States. Rather we must use our central quest as a limitation upon our inquiry. We must seek to measure and appraise the effects of major forms of social change upon organized religion, then, turning the tables, try to discover the past, present and probable future effects of religion upon social change.



## PART II

### The Church as the Product of Social Change



## CHAPTER VI

### The Evolution of the Church in Judaism and Early Christianity

OUT OF THE worship of ghosts and of nature emerged the high religions. Ghosts of the dead were honored in accordance with the powers they were assumed to possess in terms either of their influence while living or of their discovered effectiveness as spirits. Many were forgotten. Others, especially the great chiefs and heroes were exalted through myth and the elaboration of ritual until they stood high in the hierarchy of gods, their life as humans no longer remembered. Euhemerus early advanced the theory that every god had his beginning as a living man honored for his heroic deeds in life.

In contradiction to the universality of this process of the gradual elevation of ghosts to the godhead, Andrew Lang discovered among numerous peoples of a low culture, belief in a creator god. "He believes that man, himself a maker of things, easily and naturally assumed that a super-man had made the world he saw about him and those who dwelt in it. He sees no need to suppose that the high gods of the Banks Islanders, the Bushmen, and the Andamanese, and of the Pawnees in North America, evolved from more primitive conceptions of ghosts of the dead, especially since they are possessed of lofty moral attributes."<sup>1</sup> "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

The religion of the ancient Hebrews as recorded in the Old Testament offers, along with this concept of a creator God, many indications of belief in ghosts and spirits and in the strange powers of nature. Mount Sinai was a sacred mountain and must not be touched.<sup>2</sup> The Ark of the Lord was likewise charged with

<sup>1</sup> Swift, A. L., Jr., *Religion Today* (N. Y., Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1933), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 19:12-13.

a mysterious and death-dealing power.<sup>3</sup> And the story of the Garden of Eden tells of the Tree of Life and of the speaking serpent. Also the Patriarchs worship Yahweh "at the old sites and in the old way. Abraham erects his altars beneath the sacred trees . . . which had been consecrated by long use in Canaan; Isaac is more particularly associated with sacred wells, Jacob with sacred stones, all belonging to the old animistic religion.<sup>4</sup> . . . Belonging to the same order of ideas is the *matzebah*, or sacred stone, which, with the *asherah*, or sacred pole, representing the original sacred tree, is found beside every hill altar or sacred shrine in old Israel."<sup>5</sup> That this was a form of Canaanitish nature worship is clearly borne out in the words of Hosea:—"They sacrifice upon the tops of mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters play the harlot, and your brides commit adultery . . . and they (your men) sacrifice with the prostitutes."<sup>6</sup> Through the Witch of Endor the ghost of Samuel speaks to Saul.<sup>7</sup> The stranger seeking hospitality must be well received for you may be entertaining an angel unaware. Evil spirits and familiars throng the Old Testament. The worship of nature, of ghosts and of spirits never human marks the first strivings of the Hebrew people after the one true God.

Out of tribal nomadism grew a faith in a mighty and jealous God, terrible in battle, uncompromising in his demands upon His chosen people, stronger than the gods of all other tribes and peoples, a God above all gods. How and when the worship of Yahweh began no one knows. He lived in the wilderness and was probably the local and ancestral god "of those tribes of the loose Hebrew Confederation which lived in the southern Sinaitic territory."<sup>8</sup> From Him Moses received his commission beside the bush that burned but was not consumed and by Him the people of Israel were led out of bondage through the wilderness to the

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. 6:19. 2 Sam. 6:6-7.

<sup>4</sup> Astley, H. J. D., *Biblical Anthropology* (London, Oxford University Press, 1929), pp. 18-19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Hosea 4:13-14.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Sam. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Atkins, Gaius Glenn, *Procession of the Gods* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1930), p. 467.

promised land of Canaan. Here, after bitter struggle, the prophets preserved the religion of Yahweh from submergence in the nature and fertility worship of the Canaanites. And here flowered that faith in an ethical monotheism which has become the heritage as well of Christianity. At the heart of the Hebrew tradition lies this conception of a God who created all that is both in earth and in heaven, to whom all the nations of the earth will one day bow down, and who demands of His children obedience in righteousness. As the day of Israel's temporal glory waned, her faith in God's promises of a great kingdom of peace and of plenty remained strong. There would yet come a King to the throne of David before whom all the nations of the earth would come, bringing gifts. And from the beginning of the Greek period (320 B.C. and onwards) there came a gradual change from prophecy to apocalyptic. The Messianic Kingdom would come, the righteous would be resurrected and Israel be forever triumphant. And in modern Zionism, though fired by no dream of world dominion, burns the unquenchable ardor of this ancient faith, recalling Jews of all the world to a renewed loyalty and unity.

More briefly to summarize what is already too brief for accuracy or justice, the Jewish tradition enshrined a transcendent monotheism passionately ethical and inextricably interwoven with a fine pride of race based upon the conviction that the Jews are a people set apart as the special instrument of God's will for mankind.

Since Christianity is largely Jewish in origin its tradition is in many respects one with that of the Hebrew religion. Jesus was himself a Jewish prophet, reviving, in his day, the best of the prophetic tradition. He preached of the coming of a spiritual kingdom based not upon legalism and ritual, but upon justice and mercy and truth. "The arrested prophetic movement of Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah reappears in John the Baptist and Jesus after an interval of more than five centuries. The new covenant of redeeming grace—the righteousness which is in the heart and not in externalities of legal observance or ceremonial—are once more proclaimed, and the exalted ideals of the suffering servant . . . are reasserted and vindicated by the words and life of Jesus." <sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Vide*, Article *Hebrew Religion*, The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition (N. Y., Encyclopaedia Britannica Co., 1910), Vol. XIII, p. 188.



Although Jesus' message and ministry were devoted primarily, if not exclusively, to the Jewish people, yet his emphasis upon a spiritual rather than a temporal kingdom, his bitter attack upon formalism and ritual as ends, his stern insistence upon an inner righteousness of the heart, and, finally, his shameful death upon the cross, all combined to alienate the Jews from him and his gospel. Among the Palestinian Jews, after his death, there grew a considerable following who accepted him as Messiah, soon to return, and, at the same time, rigorously observed the Jewish law and the temple worship. There also developed a following of non-Palestinian, Hellenized Jews (of the Dispersion) whose loyalty both to ceremonial law and the temple was far less pronounced. Out of this latter group, of whom the martyred Stephen had been a member, grew the mission to the Gentiles.<sup>10</sup> With this mission Paul identified himself and by his influence fundamentally modified the development of Christianity. The God of Paul (as of all good Jews), was the One True God, perfect in righteousness and plenteous in mercy. Exalted high above the Universe He had created, God in the greatness of His love had compassion upon mankind, fallen into evil through Adam's sin, incarnated Himself in Jesus Christ, His Son, whom He sacrificed upon the cross as a redemption for man's many sins. Salvation was for all who believed in Jesus, the Son of God, and were born again to live in accordance with His teachings until such time as He should come again to establish His Kingdom upon earth. The transcendence of God, the righteousness of God, the sinfulness of man, the chasm between God and man bridged by the divine incarnation, and salvation offered freely to those who, repenting and believing Christ Jesus to be the Son of God, were redeemed by the shedding of His blood upon the cross,—these are the fundamentals of the Christianity of the early centuries. Thus the mission to the Gentiles lifted Christianity out of its Jewish setting, making it a universal religion in which there was no room for Jewish nationalism; elevating it above Jewish law and ritual, for those who lived in Christ were no longer bound by the old dispensation; and developing a means of redemption, through the death and resurrection

<sup>10</sup> *Vide*, Harnack, Adolf, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (N. Y., G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), Vol. I, Chap. V.

of a Savior God, which in outward form but not in ethical content, closely resembled the Greek mystery religions.<sup>11</sup> In it is a strong emphasis upon works of love and charity. Through it men become possessed with the Spirit and with power. "It is the religion . . . of moral earnestness and holiness, . . . the religion of authority and of unlimited faith; . . . and again, the religion of reason and enlightened understanding. Besides that it is a religion of 'mysteries'. . . . It is the religion of a sacred book."<sup>12</sup>

By virtue of its universalism and its syncretism and the powerful organization which, in spite of three centuries of persecution, it built up, Christianity triumphed over the many rival religions of the Roman world to become, under Constantine, the religion of the State. The thrilling story of its climb to supreme power, spiritual and temporal, under the leadership of its Popes, is well known to all who read history.<sup>13</sup> Holding the keys to Heaven, possessing the sacraments by which alone men might be saved, repository of the sacred Scriptures in which the Will of God had been revealed, and alone able authoritatively to interpret them, the Roman Catholic Church dominated the feelings and thoughts of men and dictated the policies of nations. "Thus the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was at once the sole ark of salvation and the supreme authority upon earth, moral, intellectual, and political, and submission to her was the one indispensable requirement."<sup>14</sup>

In terms of organization for power there is in all history no institution the equal of the medieval church. In a vastly complex and heterogeneous civilization it built and maintained a devout unanimity in thought and ritual to be found ordinarily only in simple and homogeneous and isolated tribal groups. Though its temporal authority was continually disputed it was sustained by its very magnitude as well as by the multiplicity of its contacts

<sup>11</sup> See Kennedy, H. A. A., *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions* (London; N. Y., Hodder & Stoughton [pref. 1913]).

<sup>12</sup> Harnack, Adolf, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity* (N. Y., G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), Vol. I, p. 312.

<sup>13</sup> *Vide*, Case, Shirley J., *The Social Triumph of the Ancient Church* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1933).

<sup>14</sup> McGiffert, Arthur C., *Protestant Thought Before Kant* (N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 8.

with the common life of the faithful. It was the "focal center of all life—of education, of learning, of charity, of medicine, of justice, of worship, of authority over both temporal and eternal destiny, effecting the unity of each community through the worship of cathedral or parish church and the authority of the priest, effecting the unity of mankind through the authority of the papacy in the reality of Christendom."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> VanDusen, Henry P., *What Is the Church?* (Journal of Religion, Vol. XVII, No. 4, Oct. 1937), p. 420.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Beginnings of Protestantism in Europe and America

THE VERY GREATNESS of the Catholic Church was one cause of the rebellion against it. Since it was the dominating institution of its day, nothing was easier than to blame the Church for all kinds of existing evils. But such complaints were relatively superficial as compared with trends in thought and practice so strong and so basic as effectually to challenge ecclesiastical authority. There was a growing nationalism, restless under the domination of the Papal See. Kings and princes cast covetous eyes at the vast properties of the Church. The humanist movement, of which Erasmus was the great leader, challenged the doctrine of man's complete unworthiness and sinfulness and his dependence for succor upon divine grace mediated only through the Church. And the whole weight of churchly authority became in itself a grievous burden, on some shoulders unjustly heavy, on others unduly light. The priests of the Church were accused, not without cause, of veniality and greed and immorality. Rightly understood, the Protestant Reformation was not primarily or chiefly a religious movement. But the widespread unrest and dissatisfaction with the existing order, economic, political, social and religious, stirred by the leaven of humanism, rose to expression behind the religious revolt of Martin Luther, a revolt made easier by an earlier revival of pietism and of mysticism and by the doctrines of Wyclif and of Huss.<sup>1</sup>

The religious significance of the Reformation lay primarily in the throwing off of the domination of the Church of Rome and in the substitution of the authority of an inerrant Bible for that of an infallible church. But it must be remembered that the reformers greatly restricted the right of private judgment in the

<sup>1</sup> See McGiffert, A. C., *Protestant Thought Before Kant* (N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), Intro., pp. 9-19.

interpretation of the Scriptures, with the result that Protestantism developed an orthodoxy fully as strict as that of Catholicism.

Much has been written of the relation of Protestantism to the growth of capitalism. Individualism certainly is symptomatic of both. Capitalism has thriven on the practical ideals of a Protestant ethic which stresses piety, industry, economy and sobriety. That Calvinism saw visible sign of the election of the individual to eternal salvation in a sober and industrious and not unsuccessful life was beyond question a stimulus to capitalistic enterprise. Whatever the causal relationship it is altogether safe to conclude that these two systems, in their parallel development, were at many points mutually reinforcing.<sup>2</sup> "On the whole it is no mistake to regard the Puritan revolution as primarily a rebellion of the capable middle class, whose growing trade interests demanded a larger measure of freedom than a paternal king and a landed aristocracy were willing to grant; and its significant contributions to the modern world were the two systems it did so much to further: the system of capitalism and the system of parliamentary government."<sup>3</sup>

In spite of his revolutionary doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, Luther outspokenly aligned himself with the rulers and against the common people. "From Luther they (the peasants of Germany) learned that they could not look to Protestantism for salvation from the dual standard which bade rulers rule in accordance with the code of the Old Testament precepts of strict reward and punishment while it required subjects to obey their political and economic masters in the spirit of a Christian and self-sacrificing meekness."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Vide*, Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930).

Tawney, R. H., *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (N. Y., Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1926).

Troeltsch, Ernest, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1931).

Niebuhr, Reinhold, "Protestantism, Capitalism and Communism" in *Religion Today*, ed. by A. L. Swift, Jr. (N. Y., Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1933).

<sup>3</sup> Parrington, Vernon L., *The Colonial Mind* (N. Y., Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (N. Y., Henry Holt & Co., 1929), p. 35.

It was as a result of this failure of organized Protestantism to meet the political, social, and economic needs of the poorer classes that Separatism arose in England, and later on the Continent and in England the radical revolutionary sects such as the Anabaptists, the Diggers, the Fifth-Monarchy Men, the Quakers, the Seekers and the Congregationalists. The Separatists were at the extreme left wing of Puritanism. The middle ground was held by the Presbyterians. The Anglicans were on the right.

In the American Colonies, the Pilgrims, who landed at Plymouth in 1620, were Separatists, of distinctly plebeian origin and with an ardent faith in democracy both in church and state. The Puritans, who first settled on the shores of Massachusetts Bay in 1629, were members of the Established Church of England, eager to transform it from within. Both in wealth and social station they were far above the Plymouth colonists. And their leaders had no use for democracy either in religion or in government. "They aspired to be reckoned gentlemen and to live in the new world as they had lived in the old, in a half feudal state, surrounded by many servants and with numerous dependants."<sup>5</sup> Yet, under compulsion of the circumstances confronting them, they accepted from Plymouth the Congregational form of church government. This and the granting of land to non-freemen in fee-simple led at length but inevitably to the break-down of the theocracy they were at such pains to establish and maintain.<sup>6</sup>

And this trend toward democracy was hastened by those who openly rebelled against the limitation of the franchise and the autocracy of the government. The Rev. Thomas Hooker and his following, finding protest vain, migrated to the Connecticut valley. About a year later, in 1634, Roger Williams was called to minister to the church in Salem. He took strenuous objection to the theory of government by divine right, declaring "that the Sovereigne, originall, and foundation of civill power lies in the people." Also, "God requireth not an uniformity of Religion to be inacted and inforced in any civill state."<sup>7</sup> Banished from the col-

<sup>5</sup> Parrington, Vernon L., *The Colonial Mind* (N. Y., Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Book I, Pts. I-II.

<sup>7</sup> *The Bloody Tenent* (Providence, R. I., Narragansett Club Publications, 1867), Vol. III, p. 249 and p. 3.

ony, he eventually founded the town of Providence, being joined there by many of his followers. The form of government he there set up and extended over Rhode Island was a thorough-going democracy. Both as social theorist and practical administrator he made significant contribution to the growth of American democracy. Other rebels there were in plenty, including Mrs. Anne Hutchinson who was also banished and excommunicated. In 1684 James II revoked the Massachusetts charter and in 1691 a new charter was granted which based suffrage not upon church membership but upon property, thus ending the reign of the Puritan theocracy.<sup>8</sup>

To appraise the influence of Puritanism upon American life is a difficult task. In colonial New England it created a close-knit organization under able and autocratic leaders. Its doctrine of the supremacy of God's Will as revealed in the Scriptures, interpreted by the ministers and enforced by the magistrates, provided an admirable instrument of social control. It extended the rule of an enforced orthodoxy beyond any mere formalism into every phase of the individual life. Its unbending austerity in the realm of personal conduct in hope of a heaven and in fear of a hell, both very real and very vivid, persisted long after its autocratic rule in church and civil governance had yielded to more democratic principles. Spreading westward with the ever-moving frontier, the Puritan conscience established itself precariously, yielding often to the cult of comfort and the loss of the sense of God's sovereignty. "In its final phase the development of this religious movement exhibits the complete enervation of the once virile faith through the influence of that part of the middle class which has grown soft in the luxury the earlier heroic discipline made possible by its vigorous and manly asceticism. Here the gospel of self-help has excluded all remnants of that belief in fatality which formed the foundation of Puritan heroism."<sup>9</sup>

With the War of the Rebellion came the tendency on the part of the churches to break their old-world affiliations and to become

<sup>8</sup> *Vide*, Sweet, William Warren, *The Story of Religions in America* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1930), Chap. V, and p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (N. Y., Henry Holt & Co., 1929), p. 105.

independent American institutions. This the great majority accomplished, forming national organizations for the control of their affairs. At the same time there was a determined movement, in which the Baptists were especially influential, completely to separate Church and State, resulting at length in the passage of the First Amendment to the Federal Constitution, in 1791, though it was not until 1833 that the State of Massachusetts provided for the disestablishment. Following the Revolution there was a marked decline of interest in religion which greatly weakened the churches. But with the beginning of the nineteenth century came a wave of revivalism which swept the country both east and west. In the meantime the great western movement had begun and the churches of the East were in their weakened condition hard-pressed to provide the frontier towns with religious leadership. And until revivalism had roused renewed interest in religion, lawlessness, profanity and lewdness were rampant—in spite of the best efforts of home missionaries sent out by the eastern churches.

As the period from the War of Independence until about 1830 was characterized, both in the nation and in the church, by an emphasis upon nationalism, so the period from 1830 to the Civil War was noted for its sectionalism. "In both church and state the spirit of nationalism gradually gave way to that of sectionalism. Especially was this true after the question of slavery began to occupy the center of the stage, until the country was divided into two distinct sections, each with its peculiar political and economic demands. So likewise was the trend in church affairs resulting in divisions and subdivisions of the churches, while each denomination began to emphasize its own peculiar interest. . . . The period is characterized by quarrels and contentions and slanders among the churches."<sup>10</sup>

The influence of frontier life upon religion in America has been great. From the beginning of the colonial period until the close of the nineteenth century that influence has been at work. "The typical American of today is the embodiment of those qualities of mind and heart that have been produced by decades of contact with the isolation, perils and rapid material shiftings of

<sup>10</sup> Sweet, William Warren, *The Story of Religions in America* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1930), p. 373.



the frontier.”<sup>11</sup> Although in so heterogeneous a population “the typical American” can be little more than mythical, there is no doubt that the conditions of frontier living have reinforced the qualities of individualism and independence, of resourcefulness and energetic endeavor, of adaptability to changing fortunes and of steadiness of will. Men and women with the spirit to conquer a wilderness are not easily conformed to conventional patterns. Yet the very perils to be faced necessitate cooperation and a measure of self-discipline in the interest of all.

Because the ethical insights of the Founder of Christianity were at one with those of the eighth century prophets there is that in the essence of Christianity which well suits the conditions of frontier life. For the message of the prophets was drawn in the main from the strong and simple morality of the nomad tribes of Israel. It was at the same time a defense of the tribal tradition of righteousness and justice and the pure worship of Yahweh and a protest against the sophistication and the selfishness and self-indulgence of the Canaanitish towns, their orgiastic fertility rites, their shrines and groves.<sup>12</sup> There was much lawlessness in the frontier towns of the west, but there was as well strong faith in God, a willingness to share hardship and danger to the uttermost and a certain rough justice which served as a rule to keep the better element in control. The revivalism of the frontier, its camp meetings with their fervor and emotion, the Methodist circuit riders, the Baptist and Presbyterian “home missionaries”, the small colleges founded for the training of ministers, denominational jealousies and aggressions and cooperations in occupying newly opened territory, all these belong to the story of the western migration and to the story of religion in America.

In the hamlets and towns left far to the rear of the westward movement, the rural church came gradually into its own. The buildings were plain, the ministers often but poorly educated and more poorly paid, each serving a number of scattered communities. And although there were no theocracies, the social and intel-

<sup>11</sup> Mode, Peter G., *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity* (N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1923), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Vide*, Wallis, Louis, *Sociological Study of the Bible* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1912).

lectual and political life of the community centered in the church. Obviously, the conditions of religious life differed with conditions of climate and soil and the racial and social backgrounds of the inhabitants, among whom native Americans usually predominated. But there were fundamental similarities in the simple and primitive life, keeping tune with the unhurried change of the seasons, isolated by poor roads and scant means of communication. In New England as late as the last decade of the eighteenth century, the parish of Lyman Beecher is thus described: "The Congregational Church was the State Church, its ministry supported by public taxes. The minister was socially the first person of the town, and in all occasions and functions where a particular order was designated the minister was placed first. And yet the Church and Society were thoroughly democratic in the sense that each one had equality of opportunity. . . . Whatever the calling, for every one there was much hand toil. . . . 'On Sundays all the families from the villages about came riding to meeting in great two-horse uncovered wagons. It is probable that more than half the people of those retired villages made no other journey during their whole lives.' " <sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Hoyt, Arthur S., *The Pulpit and American Life*, (N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1921), pp. 40-42.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Church in Industrial America

NOT UNTIL WELL towards the middle of the nineteenth century, with the coming of steam in travel and in manufacture, did the Industrial Revolution fundamentally change the American scene. Since that time the change has been tremendous, seeming constantly to accelerate. Community isolation is no more. The world is grown smaller in terms of travel time than the area occupied by the American colonies. It has developed an electrical "nervous system" by which bloodshed in India is felt in Wall Street and the words of a prime minister or the croonings of a stage entertainer are heard round the globe. Cities, the centers of industrial life, have grown until the urban population outnumbers the rural. Free public education has all but wiped out illiteracy and has added to the three Rs a richness and variety of instruction undreamed of fifty years ago. Colleges and universities, both public and private, have placed "the higher learning" within reach of any who truly desire it. Printing presses literally flood the country with books, magazines and papers. By automobile and bus on concrete roads, by railroad, by steamship and aeroplane there is an unending movement of population. Into the cities and even into the towns has come commercialized recreation offering every variety of entertainment legitimate and illegitimate, the moving picture theater attendance alone dwarfing to ludicrous insignificance the attendance upon religious services. Man's mastery of the forces of nature has given him leisure and, in gratitude, a fanatical worship of Science and a sincere belief that the Scientist is the Savior of the World.

Living in cities is, after all, a desirable thing. Health is better there just because there are more facilities with which to deal with sickness. There are philanthropies without number to care for those in need. The social settlements, the day nurseries, the play-

grounds fighting the evils of city slums make crowding into cities more desirable. But city living has undermined the unity of family life. Its industries have robbed the home of one of its major functions and have called the family out of the home and scattered them in the service of those industries. Its schools are pre-empting more and more of the waking time of the children. The movies, the street, the settlement or the Y.M.C.A. compete for the rest. Home has become a place in which to sleep—and occasionally to eat. The tempo of life has immeasurably quickened. The slow rhythm of the seasons, seed-time and harvest, are forgotten. Even the waxing and the waning of the moon go unnoted, its age-long mystic power broken by city lights and city roofs.

Organized religion has survived the flood of change. But in a variety of ways, some obvious, others hard to discern, it, too, has changed. Indeed, no institution of society, however ancient and however strong, could remain indifferent to the forces and tendencies released in the last seventy-five years without sacrificing its very existence.

It is no easy task to analyze and to set down in order all that has occurred. Two factors have always to be considered, the inherent strength and "resistance" of the various churches and the nature and intensity of the forces brought to bear upon them. The churches staunchest in creed and most compact in organization have been least affected. Churches buttressed by large endowments have, as a rule, changed but little. On the other hand the isolated rural churches of whatever denomination probably have changed least. While the vast majority of churches in the larger cities, excepting most of those heavily endowed, have shown the most rapid and fundamental changes.

In rural America life was relatively simple. In Colonial Massachusetts the functions of government and of religion were merged for a time. Even where, as in Rhode Island, the two institutions were made distinct, religion powerfully influenced the policies of government and permeated most of the concerns of life. Religion, if it be given significant place at all, is likely to be pervasive in any isolated rural community, and every community was isolated before the advent of steam and electricity and the gas engine. The church, as an institution, functioned in relation to the basic

interests of life. Since the Scriptures were sincerely believed to be the revealed will of God and since to do God's will was man's chief duty, hell the penalty and heaven the prize, the voice of the minister had weight in any choice of serious issues, public or private. Furthermore it was through the church that the real need for sociability was most regularly met. The "quilting bee," the "wood bee"<sup>1</sup> and other cooperative enterprises served the same end, but only on rare occasion. Between the first and second service of a Sabbath day there was ample opportunity, while picnic lunches were being eaten, for discussion and gossip and friendliness. Even more fundamentally, it was church membership and attendance which gave social status to the individual, the essential satisfaction of feeling that there was a social group to which he belonged. Although membership in the church was by no means as general as commonly believed, even in earliest colonial days,<sup>2</sup> church attendance was at first compulsory and, for some time after, fairly general. The Sabbath meeting was the opportunity, as well, for the exchange of news other than local. The church was thus a most effective means of adult education and by 1816 had in many communities undertaken as well the religious education of children in the Sunday school. Almost from the beginning the church had been instrumental in the founding of denominational schools and colleges. Despite the separation of church and state, religion has exerted a strong influence upon education. Although not carefully organized as in medieval England, the dispensing of charity was also a function of the church.

Even a cursory glance at the modern church must reveal the extent to which many of its earlier functions, developed and differentiated, have been taken over by other institutions. Although in point of numbers and of influence the United States is a Protestant country,<sup>3</sup> yet the functions of religion and of govern-

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, Hoyt, Arthur S., *The Pulpit and American Life* (N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1921), pp. 45-6, for a vivid description.

<sup>2</sup> Adams, James Truslow, *The Founding of New England* (Boston, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1921), p. 121:—"... approximately, not more than one in five of the adult males who went even to Massachusetts was sufficiently in sympathy with the religious ideas there prevalent to become a church member, though disfranchised for not doing so ..."

<sup>3</sup> *Vide*, pp. 74-75.

ment have become largely distinct and the rôle of the church in politics increasingly ambiguous. The higher criticism, science, rationalism and modern humanism have shattered the faith of the vast majority in the Bible as the inerrant revelation of the Will of God with the result that authority has left the pulpit. The scientist, the demagogue, and the propagandist compete to coerce the common mind. The church has not altogether lost its function as a mold of public opinion. But it has been compelled to share it very freely. Newspapers, magazines, books, movies, radios and sign boards, appealing to the final authority of "science," or using other clever tricks of "the psychology of advertising" manipulate both the public and the private will. The heaven pictured by these leaders of the people is financial success and social popularity. The worst hell they know is to be poor and "not in the swim." But these blind guides ignored, it remains true that the informative and educational function of the pulpit has lost its uniqueness and therefore much of its significance. One may hear comments on the news of the day, but never news. And in any sizable congregation the minister, while informing the ignorant, may be reasonably sure that he is being severely judged by the few who, on the particular subject, are better informed than he. The printing press and the university have in a measure supplanted him.

Nowhere does the modern church fail more dismally than in its sincere and often Herculean effort to make itself the center of the social life of the community. Its competitors have become too many and too strong. The fluidity and mobility of the population have destroyed the nucleus of such social organizations. Since transit is rapid and easy, families move with disheartening frequency. And for the same reason congregations are widely scattered over the city and its suburbs and the neighborhood church is disappearing. Social life outside the church and in complete disregard of religious affiliations which once cemented friendships, is highly organized. And organized recreations, the theatre, the movie, the dance hall, the club, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., the Jewish Community Center, the settlement, the pool room and bowling alley, the amusement park, make successful bids for the investment of leisure.

Yet at this point perhaps more than at any other the city church has fought to maintain its functioning. It has extended its activities and equipment beyond the wildest dreams of churchmen of fifty years ago. Club rooms, pool rooms, bowling alleys, games rooms, gymnasiums, moving picture auditoriums have been built and equipped in the effort once again to center the social life of the congregation in the church. And in many instances they have been moderately successful. The difficulty has lain in the fact that too often this equipment was provided not because it was needed in the community but under precisely opposite circumstances. It was because other institutions were offering these facilities and luring away their constituencies that they embarked on the venture. But other and more socially defensible reasons entered as well. Accepting the conclusions of modern educational theory, church leaders became convinced that religious education was primarily not a matter of indoctrination but of leadership and guidance in significant activities of all sorts. If character was to be built, other and more vitally interesting contacts must be established than those alone of the Sunday school class and the service of worship. As the specific functions of religion were progressively restricted so that religion became more and more an affair of one day in the week, the church expanded its organization to include wholly secular activities of vital interest to its members. The secularization of the modern church is notable among the adaptations it has made to a society in which religion has largely ceased to have central significance.

In certain sections of the south and west, especially in the smaller cities, as in "Middletown" at the time of the Lynds' first investigation, the newcomer is commonly asked, "What church do you go to?"<sup>4</sup> But very generally in the larger cities, especially among the so-called intellectuals, it is no longer true that social status is acquired by joining the church. In these communities regular church attendance is no longer "expected" of one. Indeed, the church-goer is likely to be looked upon as a trifle queer, or at least, naive. It is significant of this social trend that in certain

<sup>4</sup>Lynd, Robert S. & Helen M., *Middletown* (N. Y., Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1929), p. 315.

suburban real estate developments the church is no longer welcomed with gifts of land and other concessions but is deemed a liability, lowering the value of real estate in its neighborhood and those who would organize a church are made to feel very definitely that it is not wanted. It is impossible to say surely whether these straws in the wind indicate a prevailing or a capricious current. Yet it has blown long enough and hard enough in this one direction to induce many to conclude that the church is progressively losing its social standing in many communities. This loss is to be attributed in part to the growing anonymity of city congregations. The individual worshipper may find few friends among those present, and none of them those with whom he associates in business or in pleasure during the week. Under such circumstances, church membership can do little to give social status. And the fault, if it be one, lies not with the church but with the very structure of urban society.

Religion renders service to individuals entirely apart from their social ties. And in the same way it serves a group made up of individuals who meet one another only at church. Yet it may safely be said that religion most strongly reinforces the activities and interests of individuals whose mutual ties are many and various. By way of illustration it may be pointed out that the central importance of religion to a German Lutheran group located in the midst of a polyglot city originates in shared social interests as well as in religious faith. Religion has always thriven best in relatively small, homogeneous communities where the interests and the hazards of life are quite fully shared. Urbanization has so changed the nature of the soil out of which religion must spring as to have modified religion itself in terms of its social functioning.

The family was in all probability the first organized religious group. Before the development of a priesthood the head of the family, father or mother, served as priest. The rural family, like the primitive family, was a homogeneous unit. Indeed, on the isolated farm and under monogamy, the family was more independent and self-dependent than in the midst of a primitive tribe. A religion intimately associated with family life takes a firm hold on the individual. Industrialism and urban living, in reducing the



functions of the home and in scattering the interests of the family, have impoverished the soil which once richly contributed to the growth of religion.

It would be quite unfair to offer an analysis of the effects of industrialism upon religion without stressing its constructive as well as its destructive influences. The institution of religion, in common with the other basic social institutions, has been greatly enriched by it. In a material sense, the church has vastly profited by the wealth that has been produced. The value of church edifices alone more than doubled in the years between 1906 and 1926. Its total wealth has increased far more rapidly than its increase in membership, which has about kept pace with the growth in population over the same period of twenty years. Its capital of \$7,000,000,000, a conservative estimate, might well be considered its share in the profits of industry. Money is power, and modern buildings, modernly equipped, have greatly multiplied the church's effectiveness. It is money that has made possible the phenomenal extension of the church's activity along secular lines. It has provided, in a majority of churches, an enrichment of worship both in its setting and in its expression through music. Missionary activity, both home and foreign, has drawn wealth from the same source. Though its material gain is considered by many the measure of its spiritual loss, and though it has lost its central place in the social scheme, yet that very gain undoubtedly has served to secure for it a degree of regard that in a materialistic age it could not otherwise have possessed.

And it is certain that the church has profited by the increase in leisure that has come to the worker,—in spite of the fact that many other institutions have arisen to compete for the investment of that leisure. Obviously, too, the rapid development of education and of communication has so raised the level of intelligent appreciation as to present religious leaders a vastly improved opportunity both to impart religious truth and to secure effective lay cooperation in the work of the church. Though the minister has lost his pre-eminence in the community, he has found and utilized in his work many trained and gifted men and women. The printing press, and especially the news-press, has in a measure supplanted the pulpit. It has served as well to carry the words of the preacher

to hundreds of thousands whom otherwise they would never have reached.

Although all this may seem to labor the obvious, it needs to be said. Too frequently the apologists for religion use as an excuse for weakness what is more properly a potential means of strength. Clearly, the impact of industrialism upon the church has weakened it in some respects and strengthened it in others; and, in this double process, has changed it, both in substance and in function.

The emphasis upon urbanization in the preceding pages and the contrast drawn between the rural church before 1840 and the city church of today, must not be interpreted to imply that the present rural church has been untouched by change. Rural isolation has all but disappeared. County-seat towns extend their influence far into the open country. The machinery of modern agriculture has vastly modified life on the farm. Modern conveniences, the postal system, the telephone and radio, the automobile and the highway system have in a measure urbanized rural life. In too many instances the rural church has remained unresponsive to these influences, in the sense that it has but little modified its traditional activities. But it has not escaped the impact of our industrial civilization. It, too, has been pushed from the center and toward the periphery of the social circle. Of this, denominational leaders have been keenly aware. And since 1910 a great number of surveys have been made in the effort to discover the means by which the rural church might more adequately serve its constituency.<sup>5</sup> Out of these surveys and other studies has come an extension of church activities into such fields as recreation and education which is analogous to that of the urban churches. There has been a consolidation of churches, the construction of facilities for recreation, and, in some localities, the development of what is known as the larger parish plan by which the resources of the churches of a considerable area are combined both as to leadership and equipment.

With the specific types of churches in city and country which have been evolved in response to changing environments we deal

<sup>5</sup> *Vide*, Eaton, Allen, and Harrison, Shelby M., *A Bibliography of Social Surveys* (N. Y., Russell Sage Foundation, 1930), pp. 10-15, 260-7.

in later chapters.<sup>6</sup> It is here our concern to mark the contrasts between an agrarian and an industrial civilization at those points where they impinge upon the church to change its meaning and place in community life. Against the anonymity and impersonality of the modern city, we must recall the self-contained and isolated community of yesterday, homogeneous in the backgrounds and interests of its citizens. These good folk knew one another, were interested and concerned in one another. Distinctions and differences there were, of course; but, at the same time, a keen personal awareness of their existence vastly different from the cold unconcern of the modern city. There were saints and sinners then as now but then the sinners were on the defensive and the whole weight of social approval was on the side of religion as an institution. Although church membership was not widespread, church attendance was general, the non-churchgoer usually a social outcast. For non-attendance was displeasing to God and therefore put the community in a certain peril. How much the times have changed is well illustrated by a recent cartoon. Out of a window high in an apartment building heads are stretched to gaze across the court to a window from which sounds of singing emerge. The listeners show their surprise at what they hear, and one of them remarks:—"Those people must be drunk. They're singing hymns!"

As there were saints and sinners so also there were moral issues upon which difference of opinion existed. But rarely were these major issues. The structure of morality was solid and clearly discerned. Certain moral lapses were condoned, of course, but they were not socially accredited. An ordered life with little change from year to year made possible an established code of morals for which justification was traditionally found in Scripture. It is needless to point the contrasts with our own day. But a word of warning is necessary. It must not be forgotten that in certain long-settled areas of the United States away from the seaports and the tides of foreign immigration, the Protestant church remains a popular and formative influence and the minister a very leading citizen. Yet by and large this is not the case. In industrial America organized religion has steadily lost in social prestige and power.

<sup>6</sup> *Vide*, Chapters XI and XII.

## CHAPTER IX

### Religion and the Scientific Temper

MODERN SCIENCE HAS made the industrial revolution possible. Therefore it might fairly be said that science has done much to undermine the social status of religion. But it is in the effect of the scientific temper upon the average mind that many find an even more serious attack upon religion.

It is easy to exaggerate the extent to which science has been assimilated by the masses of the people. Obviously, it demands too stern a discipline and too rigorous a method to allow many to become scientists. As elsewhere indicated in this book, to the majority science is the modern name for a magic beyond normal comprehension. In view of the miracles it has already accomplished, nothing is impossible to science. This attitude creates, instead of a rational universe, a primitive chaos where anything may happen. Magic was the precursor of science and religion fought many a battle against it before science was born. This modern world of scientific magic turns from the worship of God to learn the charms and tricks by which men may fly, the old be made young, the sick be made well and the ugly be made beautiful. It was always so. Only those who ask the more fundamental questions, who know the deeper unrest, turn dissatisfied away to seek elsewhere than in spell and incantation the secrets of the source and meaning and end of life. Science, the modern magic, has turned men's minds toward *things* and the methods by which they are made and controlled, toward stark power under the direction of man's will. The religious attitude of adoration of the Holy One, of contemplation and communion and supplication, is crowded for room. And since first magic and religion, branching from an ancient common stem, rose over against each other this conflict has existed.

But the conflict between religion and science today is less favor-

able to religion than the more ancient conflict between religion and magic. And for this reason. God remains a personal and unpredictable factor in a Universe now recognized as everywhere law-abiding and self-consistent. In the Universe which science sees there is no room for divine whimsy. All is order and relatedness. Even though it is true that this relatedness is merely a metaphysical assumption and that the greatest of scientists humbly acknowledge it to be so, yet it operates to exclude religion as a naively unscientific conception of things.

The modern religionist has no choice but to agree that religion conceived as operative solely in a realm beyond the reach of natural law, that is in a "supernatural" sphere, is an absurd anachronism. The phenomena of religion in all their strange variety are either a part of an ordered and universal relation or they are but the childish efforts of men in an age both prelogical and pre-scientific to "explain" and so in a manner to control unusual and terrifying occurrences.

The champions of religion have made a great tactical blunder in letting their opponents identify religion with the unknowable, the imponderable and the unpredictable. For the sure result has been that every advance of science into the dark places of human ignorance has meant the retreat of religion thus identified with chaos. It has implied that religion begins where intelligent and logical control leaves off, that the realm of religion is the realm of the inexplicable—the realm which knowledge (or science) has not yet penetrated, the realm within which the methods of the operation of law are not yet understood. Thus it implies that the supernatural world is simply a naive construct of man's ignorance, guesses as to the nature of the unknown based not upon intelligent observation and careful reasoning but upon wishful thinking centering in the urgent wish to escape personal extinction in death. It inevitably follows from this that no attempt is or can sensibly be made to find out why a certain ritual works and another does not. Primitive gods are autocratic and wayward. As to the God of the Christians and the Jews, His wisdom is unsearchable, His ways past finding out.

It further follows that men have recourse to religion only in situations which are beyond control by normal means and that

they see God at work only in seemingly inexplicable or uncontrollable phenomena. In insurance law an earthquake is often designated an "act of God." An eclipse of the sun once gave rise to abject fear and to lamentations and expiatory sacrifices. Now that the laws of the eclipse are understood only the naive feel the religious thrill in its presence. If some one falls sick, a doctor is consulted who understands the laws that govern disease, not a witch-doctor who claims to cure by virtue of his control of supernatural forces and entities. Only when the disease defies medical knowledge as it rushes its victim on toward death, does the scientist in modern man capitulate to the savage, in the use of prayer and ritual. Religion thus becomes the sign and symbol of an intellectual naiveté quite uncongenial to the scientific temper,—an atavistic emotional response to life's more serious difficulties.

Superficial as is this "scientific" reaction to "religion," it is none the less prevalent and very influential. The satisfying answer is found in the insistence that the phenomena of religion belong not in a realm of chaos subjectively created but that they are a part of the totality of reality, within the scheme of relatedness, capable and deserving of the same scientific study and analysis as are the phenomena of physics and of chemistry.

To the ancient and satirical question "Canst thou by searching find out God?" the answer must be "Ultimately, yes!" Man is an organism upon which certain stimuli impinge. Confused by the difficulties of conveying each to the other the nature of these impingements and of the feelings, thoughts and actions they rouse, confused by the multitude of over-lapping impressions and reactions and by the need of devising ways and means of measuring and comparing them, men have yet succeeded in discovering and setting down certain ordered behaviors and sequences of those stimuli which best lend themselves to measurement and classification. Much remains to be done. The greatest scientists are invariably humble. Said one, "The best scientists have to recognize that they are just kindergarten fellows playing with mysteries—our ancestors were, and our descendants will be."<sup>1</sup> There is no sound basis for concluding that the phenomena of religion are of a sort to defy scientific validation. Take for example those

<sup>1</sup> Whitney, W. R., in *New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 1930.

alleged phenomena basic to religion from the beginning of time, the impingement upon human beings of stimuli held to come from spirit entities. No thorough and open-minded student of psychic research can today deny that scientific progress has been made in the measurement, analysis and classification of these alleged communications such as to give definite promise of convincing scientific conclusions as to their origin and nature within a relatively few years. Whatever one may believe, *a priori*, about these occurrences, the fact remains that they are of the essence of religion in all ages and civilizations and that they do lend themselves to the methodology of science, at least to the extent of controlled experimentation and some precision in measurement of operating forces.

If the basic hypothesis of religion, the objective reality of Spirit, is found to be true scientifically, it will profoundly modify human existence—in the direction of many present religious convictions and values. If it is found to be untrue, religion as a social institution integrally a part of the culture pattern will disappear to be replaced by a humanitarianism which will preserve many of its values but which historically and logically will not be religion at all.

An attempted evasion of the alternative as to the reality or non-reality of spirit is found in the assertion that religion lies wholly in the realm of values, a realm from which science is by definition excluded. An adequate statement and rebuttal of this argument would lead far afield from a sociological appraisal of religion. Ultimate conclusions would be found rooted in one or another theory of epistemology. The author can here do no more than register his own conviction that to attempt to classify religious phenomena as altogether within the realm of values is untrue to those phenomena and creative of a false dichotomy of experience, whereby religious truth is immediately and intuitively known apart from any need of scientific corroboration while other truth can be discovered and validated only in the laboratory of test and experimentation. All science is purposeful, has an end in view and therefore has value in terms of that end. Science cannot avoid the possession of a philosophy. Religion, in its turn, is more than a hierarchy of values. The stimuli to religious responses do not all

originate within the responding individual nor are the external stimuli religious only by virtue of the responses they arouse. Value and measurement are integral both to science and to religion.

But to understand the change wrought in the place and function of religion by the scientific temper it is necessary only to recognize the extent to which science has usurped the place of religion as the intelligent and effective way of getting things done. Not only does it seem true that the scientist has the stronger magic than the priest. But also he is ever concocting new spells, performing greater miracles. While the priest, mumbling the old incantations, is serviceable only to guard mankind against the final and complete victory of that foe whom science has not yet vanquished, namely, death. When science learns to prolong life indefinitely, religion—of this sort—will altogether disappear.

It is neither strange nor accidental that many of those who find in science a false messiah and in the churches an empty faith are discovering in one or another of the cults the strength and assurance they so sadly need. For it is invariably true of the stronger of these cults that they offer fellowship with spiritual reality, be it a Negro Father Divine who feeds the hungry and heals the faithful, a God of the "Rising Tide" of Buchmanism who "can speak to every man" ("Accurate, adequate information can come from the mind of God to the minds of men who are willing to take their orders from Him")<sup>2</sup> or the spirit guides of spiritualism who through planchettes and pencils, thumpings and the small ends of megaphones make their presence unmistakable to believers.

Man's growing dependence upon science, quite as much as the changes science has wrought in his material culture account for religion's loss of centrality. Also, for many so-called liberals science has robbed religion of its intellectual respectability. Religion has sunk to the level of an emotional response to traditional symbols, a response of the heart to much that the head discredits. Though the masses of the people still are governed almost wholly by their emotions, it is safe to conclude that a religion unsupported in reason cannot indefinitely survive in a civilization so friendly to the advance of science.

Religion is not belittled in being made one with the totality

<sup>2</sup> Rising Tide, December, 1937, p. 47.



of experience. Its realities are not endangered if admitted to be subject to scientific investigation. The theologian who stubbornly insists that his truth is of a different sort, a sort self-validating, and therefore incompatible with tests and analyses, stands in ignorant isolation from his many colleagues in the search for understanding. And thereby he does religion a great disservice.

Theologian and scientist are fellow-seekers. The latter may heatedly deny that he is in any way guided in his choice of projects by the human uses to which his findings might be put. The former may insist that his whole interest is in serving mankind. In the actuality of facts both are responsive to human need and interest, and both confront phenomena external to themselves which challenge them to measure and to classify.

Priests and medicine-men have long profited by the myth of mystery. They have claimed to walk in a realm too dangerously rarefied for ordinary mortals. Now the poseurs among the scientists are copying them. Each group in its struttings and whisperings makes the other appear ridiculous. It is high time all serious searchers after truth turned from this mumbo-jumbo, together to confront a universe as yet but little understood and poorly utilized to satisfy man's needs and to feed his aspirations.

## CHAPTER X

### The American Church To-day in Facts and Figures

OUR SOMEWHAT SWEEPING generalizations have seemed to relegate religion to a relatively minor rôle in the drama of modern social life. Men have lost much of their awareness of God as a participant in daily living. Science has solved so many riddles and stands so high in public esteem that it has given us a false sense of security against the vast mysteries which enfold the tiny kernel of our knowledge. Amazedly grateful for what Science has given us, our minds cushioned against the shock of awe in the presence of powers beyond comprehension and control, we seem no longer to need God as our progenitors needed Him. As a consequence those who profess to speak for Him and to show others the way to find and to use Him in daily affairs have lost much of their influence and authority.

In like manner the church has lost its centrality. The agencies that have usurped its functions in such fields as education, recreation, and the care of the sick and the poor base their policies upon hard facts and cold rationality rather than upon the will of God as divinely revealed. The quickened tempo of life together with the invasion of the holy day by secular delights and duties, leave little opportunity for individual or social worship. And the public schools and private homes of the land have trained up a generation never taught to see the integration of religion with life.

If all this be true, it would seem inevitable that the material well-being of this once great institution must be grievously affected. Such loss in prestige and influence must undermine the physical structure through decline in membership, in financial resources and in the number and quality of its professional leaders. Let us see if this be true.

During the colonial period in Massachusetts, as we have learned, only one in five were church members. In Virginia it has been

estimated that the ratio was as low as one in twenty.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the colonial period there were about 3,000 churches, 28 denominations of which 18 were "imported," and 5% of the population were active church members. By 1835 there were about 25,000 churches, 75 denominations, and 14% of the people were church members. By 1890, when free land for homesteading was virtually exhausted in the United States, there were 165,000 churches, 143 denominations, and 20% of the population were in the churches. By 1926, there were 232,000 churches, 212 denominations, and 55% of the people 13 years of age and over were church members.<sup>2</sup> From 1906 to 1926 "the nation's adult church-membership has increased at almost exactly the same rate as its adult population."<sup>3</sup> Estimates for the period, 1926-1936, show a gain of 1.65% in church membership as compared with a population growth of .98%.<sup>4</sup> This flatly contradicts the anticipated decline in the church's numerical strength. Furthermore, "there are at least 185,000 Sunday schools in the nation, enrolling more than 21,000,000 persons, 95% of them Protestants, and served by more than 2,000,000 teachers and officers."<sup>5</sup>

What of the church's financial status? In 1926, "the value of church edifices alone, not including such items as pastors' residences, investment property, school buildings, hospitals, etc., is reported as \$3,800,000,000, while for 1926 the total expenditure of local churches amounts to \$817,000,000. . . . 40% as large as the expenditures of public schools."<sup>6</sup>

"During the ten years from 1916 to 1926, the value of church edifices alone increased \$2,163,000,000. or 129%. During the same period the general level of prices . . . rose only 41%, or a third as rapidly."<sup>7</sup> ". . . it seems reasonable to conclude that the total

<sup>1</sup> Sweet, William W., *The Story of Religions in America* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1930), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Figures provided by Douglass, H. Paul and Brunner, Edmund deS., *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1935), pp. 22, 26, 28, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Fry, C. Luther, *The U. S. Looks at Its Churches* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1930), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kieffer, Mrs. Maude H., *Christian Herald*, June 27, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> Douglass and Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>6</sup> Fry, C. Luther, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

value of church property in America, is in all probability at least \$7,000,000,000."<sup>8</sup>

Through the years of the depression there has been a considerable decline in Protestant giving. For 25 major denominations in the United States and Canada "there has been a decline in total giving of about 43% since 1928—although the actual figure is probably not quite that large because of the inclusion of trust funds that year. . . . There has been a slight gain in contributions in 1935 over 1934, but the totals for 1935 are lower than for any year except 1934."<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Douglass, approaching the matter from the angle of church expenditures through 1934, writes:

"No exactly comparable data exist by which to measure the effect of the current financial depression upon church finances. Twenty out of thirty-five leading denominations compared in 1934 had reduced their total expenditures by from thirty to fifty per cent, and five over fifty per cent. Yet four had actually increased expenditures and it is fairly certain that the average income of the national benevolent boards of the major denominations has not been reduced as much as have the personal incomes of the American people, or their personal expenditures and savings."<sup>10</sup>

Thus we find convincing proof of the vast and growing wealth of the church and every indication that though it inevitably suffered during the depression, that suffering was not caused by any decline in the loyalty of its members.

How has the church fared in the number and quality of its professional leaders? "The 1930 Census figure gives the United States 148,848 ministers, about 98,000 of whom are white Protestants available for the service of the 163,538 white Protestant churches. There are thus about 600 ministers for each thousand of these churches."<sup>11</sup> In short, there are not enough ministers completely to man the churches. Since colonial times this has always been true. The first American colleges were founded to provide a trained ministry to the churches. Yet there are more

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup> Information Service, Department of Research and Education, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, Vol. XV, No. 12, March 21, 1936.

<sup>10</sup> Douglass and Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

ministers than there are churches able to pay them a living wage. "The annual demand for new ministers for the white Protestant churches is estimated at 6.5% of the total number, or 6,400 recruits. The present graduates of theological seminaries furnish only 21 per cent of these necessary replacements though . . . even this fraction represents more men than can be employed at reasonable salaries." <sup>12</sup>

Beginning early in the colonial period and in sharp contrast with the Old World tradition there began to develop a definite hostility to an educated ministry. Exhorters and revivalists and frontier preachers answered the call to "exercise their gifts" and repudiated the "factory-made preaching" of more learned colleagues. Even to-day "the country is not solidly 'sold' on an educated ministry, and the assumption that the church should have such a ministry is not nearly so authentic as are the characteristics of Main Street." <sup>13</sup>

" . . . the level of ministerial education has continuously declined from the earliest colonial times to the present day. The rate of decline has been checked, but the downward trend has never been reversed . . . the proportion of college graduates in the ministry has been smaller in every decade since 1640, and the percentage of college graduates entering the ministry or other religious callings has sharply declined for fifty years." <sup>14</sup>

According to the Census of 1926, 41% of all white Protestant ministers were graduates of neither college nor seminary; 78% of Negro ministers were in the same category; and only 6.6% of Catholic priests were similarly classified.

These facts are matters for serious concern. Though it is true that an uneducated ministry is a tradition of long standing, it would seem that the steadily increasing educational attainments of the general population and the more exacting demands of the modern ministry would operate steadily to raise the level of ministerial education. It is reasonable to expect, on the other hand, that any notable loss in the social prestige of the church would operate to limit both the number and the quality of the young

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 108.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 109.

men willing to embark upon a ministerial career. It is likely, too, that this loss of prestige would register itself in such a decline in professional leadership before it had marked effect upon church finance or church membership.

It is only fair to state that there is in many denominations and in many sections of the country a strong and growing effort to raise the educational requirements for ordination. This tendency is, however, in some measure offset by the increasing number of Bible schools which admit students with very little formal educational training to brief courses, biblical and theological, but more emotional than scholarly, and graduate them into the ministry of the Christian church. If higher standards ultimately prevail it will be because denominational and local church committees refuse to accept untrained ministers. But this will not happen until through increased income and through consolidation of churches and other sane and necessary economies it is possible to offer the well-trained minister a wage more nearly proportionate to that of the other learned professions.

There is another and perhaps more sensitive indicator of the church's popularity, church attendance. Tradition and the inertia of habit might maintain membership while it failed to keep the pews filled from Sunday to Sunday.

Over a period of six years the Congregational-Christian communion has been gathering Sunday by Sunday the morning attendance figures from 678 churches. The results "seem to indicate that, on the average, only 30 per cent of the seats in our churches are being used and that perhaps only 25 per cent of those shown as members of our churches are supporting their churches with their personal attendance and active encouragement."<sup>15</sup>

From the Yearbook of the same communion for 1934 the Department of Research and Education of the Federal Council computed attendance figures based upon the estimates submitted to the Yearbook by 3,276 churches. The results are chiefly significant in showing "that the attendance at small churches is much larger in proportion to the total membership than is that of the larger churches. Apparently, there is a fairly definite sectional difference also. Church attendance in proportion to membership

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Congregational Commission on Church Attendance, 1936.

in the smallest churches, at least, is proportionately greater in most states in the South and west of the Mississippi River. There seems to be no significant difference between urban and rural communities." <sup>16</sup>

It seems clear from these studies that, in this communion at least, there is a marked difference between membership and attendance. The study based on a six year count of actual attendance also indicated a decline in the number attending. The figures rose from 1930 to 1932 then fell sharply in 1933, continuing downward through 1935.

Obviously, it is not easy to generalize from the conflicting facts we have thus far considered. The church's seemingly unquestionable loss in social status is offset by its steady gains in membership, its vast wealth, the success with which it has weathered the depression and the fact that it has more ministers than it can afford to employ. (Obviously it is the small rural churches that account for this condition of affairs. Seven out of ten of them "have only a fraction of a minister each.") <sup>17</sup> But the majority of their ministers are poorly trained or altogether untrained and the educational standards of the ministry have been steadily falling since 1640. Also church attendance where carefully studied constitutes only a quarter of church membership and seems to be on the decline. Another point, passed over in our earlier consideration of the 21,000,000 Sunday school members, is the fact that there is a serious decline in the Sunday school enrollment. "This has been registered on a national scale and has appeared as a challenging urban phenomenon." <sup>18</sup> And the fact that modern children too often don't want to go to Sunday school and that many modern parents no longer take for granted that their children shall attend—may be further clear indications of the church's loss of status.

Is religion's material success the measure of its secularization? Is it growing in wealth and in membership because it has adopted worldly criteria, conformed to what is expected and desired of it by those whose spiritual sight is dimmed? Is it the bowling alley,

<sup>16</sup> Information Service, Department of Research and Education, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, Vol. XV, No. 41, Dec. 12, 1936.

<sup>17</sup> Douglass and Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

the gymnasium, the movie, the clinic, the bridge party, the strawberry festival, the dance which account for its prosperity? Or is it because the church remains the mediator between Man and God, offering spiritual food to the spiritually hungry, the security of an unshaken faith to a world in moral chaos? Or is its material structure but a monument to a once vital organization, a tribute of tradition to a way of life once meaningful and to a God once deemed worthy of all reverence and awe? And is the tradition breaking down as church and Sunday school attendance wane and the educational standards of the ministry continue to fall while the schooling of the masses steadily rises?

We must turn to the churches themselves, classifying their types and analyzing their activities to see if from a more intensive study a more reliable appraisal can be made of the influences of social change upon them.



## CHAPTER XI

### The Status of the Rural Church

MUCH IN THE changing social environment of the church we have found to be destructive of the church's influence. And in church statistics we discovered a corroboration of this judgment, in spite of a steady growth in membership and in finance. A small and declining attendance, a diminished Sunday school and a long downward trend in the educational standards of the Protestant ministry, together with the inability to pay even the bulk of well-trained ministers a reasonable salary, definitely indicate that serious loss of social prestige has occurred.

Thus far we have dealt with the church in general, making but passing reference to specific churches and to the similarities and differences between churches in dissimilar environments. Now we must seek a more detailed analysis of the effects of social change upon religion in the study of particular churches rural and urban. But before we can do this with any adequacy we must first try to answer the question: What is the major significance of the divisiveness of organized religion in the United States?

That our country has no "established" church, that government and religion are indeed quite separate organizations and that religion cannot be taught in public schools are all fruits of religious divisiveness elsewhere dealt with in this volume.<sup>1</sup> But our present concern is to see how these different faiths are related to one another and to different parts of our nation. Against this background we may then study individual churches as rural and urban types, showing varying degrees of adjustment to environmental changes.

First it is well to recognize that, in statistical terms, the United States is overwhelmingly a Protestant country. "The Roman Catholics, Jews, and other non-Protestants taken together make up

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, Chapter XV.

only 38 per cent of the total adult membership of the United States.”<sup>2</sup> “There is not a single state in which either Jews or Roman Catholics constitute a majority of the total population. . . . But there are nine southern states in which the Protestants constitute a majority of the population.”<sup>3</sup>

A second basic factor in comprehending the social meaning of a divided church is the realization that, although there are 212 denominations in the United States, they are not spread over the entire country, but are clustered in relatively small areas.

“All bodies . . . are highly concentrated geographically. There are only three bodies—the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the Roman Catholic Church—which have as many as three congregations in every state in the Union.”<sup>4</sup>

A third factor of great significance is that, within Protestantism, the zeal of denominational leaders and the keen and often bitter competition between them have led to the founding and building of too many churches. “Quite apart from its denominational rivalries, the church throughout the nation was projected on too small a scale and in too many separate units.”<sup>5</sup> As a result many communities, especially the smaller ones, are over-churched. Thus three or four rival churches, all inadequately supported and ineffectual both in facilities and leadership, struggle along in a community which at a lower per capita cost could adequately support a single church and equip it with facilities and paid leadership far superior to anything any of the four churches can possibly offer or afford. Beyond question Protestant divisiveness has been and remains a significant source of weakness. It is partly to be explained by the polyglot character of our population. Group after national group has carried over into America its own particular form of Old World religion. This origin of denominations among many varied national groups helps to account both for their numbers and their concentration geographically.

<sup>2</sup> Fry, C. Luther, *The U. S. Looks at Its Churches* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1930), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Douglass and Brunner, *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1935), p. 274.

To complete the picture as a background to a study of definite types of churches beginning with the rural, it is necessary to know that there is distinctly apparent "a tendency at nearly all points toward an integration of the organized forces of Protestantism and toward their coöperative functioning in contrast with their sectarian isolation, if not active competition, in the past."<sup>6</sup> It has been found that in America vast numbers of Christians freely transfer their allegiance from one denomination to another, and that generally speaking, denominational distinctions seem of less importance than ever before to a majority of Protestant church people. Furthermore there have been created organizations whose function it is to relate and integrate church work interdenominationally. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the many state Federations of Churches are outstanding illustrations of this trend. Also it may be said that, in spite of the very frequent failure of efforts in this direction, a degree of coöperation is developing interdenominationally at the point of preventing competition in the occupation of inadequately churched or unchurched areas. In the field of religious education, the International Council of Religious Education is functioning as a co-ordinating agency; in missions, the Home Missions Council and the Council of Women for Home Missions.

Likewise the Movement for Church Union, encouraged by the United Churches of Canada, and by the ecumenical spirit of the world conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh in the summer of 1937<sup>7</sup> with their move toward a World Council of Churches, gives promise of a mutual reinforcement of the churches of Protestantism with a resultant gain in efficiency and economy. The split between the churches north and south in the Civil War bids fair to be healed. But in spite of the ardent desire of all true Christians to wipe out altogether the shame of a divided Christendom, and in spite of the mounting sense of weakness shared by the Christian churches of the world, it seems improbable that the organic unity of the Church of Christ can be established within the next two hundred years.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Douglass and Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>7</sup> *Vide*, p. 117.

<sup>8</sup> *Vide*, for a careful analysis of this issue, Douglass and Brunner, *op. cit.*, Chapter XV.

Our interest in the rural church is two-fold. It best illustrates the weaknesses due to smallness of size and denominational divisiveness and it is on the whole the type of church least modified by social change.

We have learned that to primitive folk, living close to nature, religion is a great reality, pervading all of life. We have discovered that Christianity has inherited much from the nature religions. And in America, before the industrial revolution, we know that religion, symbolized in the church, held a central place. We might well expect, therefore, that in rural communities where the pattern of life still is shaped by the seasons, where people are fewer and their interests much alike, organized religion would remain staunch and significant. We find it to be only partially true. Both colonists and primitives found it advisable to live in close-knit groups for mutual aid and protection. With the disappearance of wild beast and hostile tribe this became unnecessary. The open country, with its tiny hamlets and wide-scattered farms, lacks the social cohesion essential to organized religious life. The large cities which crowd folk together in such vast numbers that they cease to be persons one to another, have a like effect upon the social bond. It is in the open country and in the large cities that religion is weakest.<sup>9</sup>

Religion in the open country must serve a small and scattered constituency often separated by poor roads from the one-room church which rarely can afford more than a fraction of the time of a minister. Sermons may be preached once a month or less frequently. The Sunday school may be non-existent or may meet when church services are held. If it is a weekly affair there are not many children near enough to come regularly and bad weather drops the attendance to zero.

"In the South, more than in any other part of the United States, the pioneer tradition of the non-resident minister has persisted. The circuit rider is made responsible for the care of a number of preaching points, and travels from one to another, visiting each but once or twice a month and staying only long enough to preach a sermon and, now and then, to conduct a Sunday school. In certain less-favored agricultural areas the minister is not even

<sup>9</sup> *Vide*, Douglass and Brunner, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

available for funerals, but funeral services are held at infrequent intervals for all who have died since the last pastoral visit."<sup>10</sup>

"No church can be like our church. There's only one Elder Josiah Tompkins and only one Mehitabel Smith." Add to the varying personalities, the local distinctions of history and tradition, soil, roads and natural geography and you realize at once the difficulties of broad generalization. Nevertheless, some classification is necessary. To the church in the open country must be added the village church, the town church and the county-seat church, the church in an industrial village,<sup>11</sup> the church in a rural community made up of people of foreign birth and foreign stock. Also we must not forget the rural church in a summer resort and the rural church on the seacoast or in the mountains where making "moon-shine" is a major occupation.

It is not within the scope of our investigation to study in detail churches of these various types. Were we to do so we should find most of the open country churches poor and inadequate in equipment and in leadership, indifferent through weakness to the changes taking place in the life about them. Churches in average towns would, on the whole, be found to be small, complacent and unchanging; those in industrial towns more often than not "owned" and run by the town's "big manufacturer"; those in the summer resort town pampered and pauperized by "city folks." But we must be content with generalizations.

"This period (1910-1936) has carried forward at an accelerated speed those fundamental changes by which almost every typical aspect of the rural life and rural business of the nineteenth century has been radically transformed. . . . The town and village are playing an ever larger rôle in rural affairs. . . . In this process the small self-contained neighborhood, once the characteristic unit of rural social organization, is disintegrating. . . . The general standard of living of rural people has been raised. . . . The intellectual outlook has broadened. . . . There have been noteworthy developments within the church. . . . On the other hand, it is still true

<sup>10</sup> Brunner, E. deS., *Church Life in the Rural South* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1923), p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> "Nearly one-fourth of our villages . . . are industrial, and in them live about 4,000,000 people." Douglass and Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

that the characteristic rural church is the same type of church that was produced by the era that produced the old-fashioned homestead, the one-room district school, and the self-contained neighborhood. . . . Indeed, the church as a whole and in its local congregation has, in the main, resisted change. As a consequence many rural churches have been abandoned. . . . Many others are so weak as to be practically ineffective while a disheartening proportion of the rural population is outside the membership of any church and many rural communities have no religious privileges at all." <sup>12</sup>

The rural church on the whole bears out the thesis that organized religion has suffered grave loss in prestige and influence. The church in the open country is starved by the poverty of its resources, lacking the barest necessities of institutional well-being. Religion cannot thrive where distance spanned by poor roads hinders fellowship. And even though neighborliness should conquer distance there would remain the difficulty of securing funds adequate to provide a decent building decently equipped, and trained leadership. With the improvement of transportation and of the economic status of the farmer comes the opportunity to meet the religious and social needs of the open country through the creation of a larger parish which consolidates a number of adjoining parishes, selects or builds a church edifice central to the whole area, and by pooling of resources manages to secure a trained leader or leaders—one to preach good sermons in the central church and to visit among the people and another to organize and direct the religious education, the social and the recreational life of the children and youth, using the small and scattered church buildings as Sunday schools and centers of week-day activity. This larger parish plan is already successfully in operation in selected areas both in open country and in town.

The town church is far better off than its open country cousin. Here the retired farmer lives, here youth finds better facilities for education and for recreation. Here there is neighborliness, the intimate sharing of interests. The soil and Nature, though some-

<sup>12</sup> Report of the Findings Committee of The National Conference on the Rural Church, Washington, D. C., January 14-17, 1936, published in Information Service, Vol. XV, No. 9, Feb. 29, 1936.

what ignored, remain factors in daily life. Tradition is strong for the middle aged and elderly are by numbers and influence in full control. Most people belong to a church. Attendance is fair. But the churches themselves have been lulled into inaction by the tradition which supports them. There are too many of them in most towns. Too few have full time ministers and ministerial training and support are low. For the most part these churches stand content to render traditional services in the good old way. But social change has burst the barriers of tradition in almost every other phase of the community's life. Unless the churches rouse from their lethargy, strive by new means to meet new needs and interests they will inevitably lose their status in the town, surrender their stronghold to the forces that are weakening the city church.

## CHAPTER XII

### The Church and the City

WE HAVE FOUND the average rural church either too weak or too complacent to adapt greatly to the changed conditions and needs around it. The city church not in the backwaters and eddies but in the sweep of the current of innovation has staunchly fought against it; yet mauled and pummelled by the full force of the stream, it has been changed, willy-nilly.

The effort to classify city churches by types is even more difficult than in the case of rural churches. For they are of greater variety due to the larger number and strength of the influences that play upon them. Douglass has attempted a classification in terms of the number and range of the activities in which they engage. He lists 33 activities in the order of the frequency of their occurrence, in 1044 city churches intensively studied, then classifies the individual churches as "typically developed," "underdeveloped and fragmentary," "intensively developed or elaborated," as "socially adapted" or as "erratic." This method is commendable for the precision with which it may be applied and for the significant differences it reveals between individual churches and between denominational groups. Valuable as it is, it has certain drawbacks. The terms used imply a value-judgment frequently unjustified and churches fundamentally different in tradition and constituency are placed in the same classification.

For our purposes it is better, since we are here primarily concerned with the effects of social change upon the churches, to be satisfied with a less precise method which gives primary consideration to the varieties of social and environmental pressure that have been chiefly instrumental in producing modifications. It recognizes the correctness of Douglass' assertion that city churches are derived from the basic pattern of the rural church, maintaining at their core the activities most frequently found in



country and city—preaching and Sunday school, Ladies' Aid or Guild, Women's Missionary Society and Young People's Society, in that order of frequency.<sup>1</sup> It also acknowledges the importance of "number and range of activities" as one means of describing a church. But it is more interested in environmental factors as causative of changed structure and in those factors within the church itself which resist or expedite that change.

We have elsewhere discussed the more influential environmental changes brought about by the industrial revolution. Viewed now from the angle of the city dweller and in terms of their effects upon city life we may distinguish three major types:

1. Changes in the number and kind of people in a given locality, together with resulting changes in the social life of the locality, in its stores, its forms of recreation and of religion, that is, in brief, population movements.

2. Changes through the development of new and often competing institutions (a) of communication and of information, such as the telegraph and telephone, the radio and the press; (b) of education such as public and parochial schools, night schools, settlement classes and other types of informal education; (c) of transportation, such as new subway or bus lines—sometimes producing changes in population, but invariably leading the people living in the area to find interests outside of it now made accessible; and (d) changes through the development of institutions of social intercourse and recreation such as public recreation centers, community centers, social and political clubs, settlements, other churches, Y.M. and Y.W.C.A.s and the like.

3. As a result of these other changes, yet of great significance in themselves—changes in the nature of neighborhood and family life, essentially through loss of neighborhood and family unity and cohesion.

We have already traced the subtler modifications which the last two of the three major types of change produce. They affect all city churches in inverse proportion to the staunchness of their

<sup>1</sup> "Only 42 per cent of open-country churches have even a women's organization, and only 25 per cent a young people's society." Douglass and Brunner, *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1935), p. 136.

creedal traditions and denominational organizations and to the size of their endowments. The first type, that of population movements, is both more immediate and more localized, accounting in large part for the varying types of churches which have appeared as specific adaptations to a changed local population.

It seems at times that the modern church is a house built on shifting sands, so rapidly do people come and go, and so insecure is the foundation they provide. This note of insecurity is heightened by a careful study of the various adaptations made by city churches to the environmental changes they confront. Professor George Kincheloe after years of such study in Chicago has devised what he laconically calls "the behavior sequence of a dying church."<sup>2</sup> Although the pattern offers certain alternatives, even these are predetermined by accidents of environment or of tradition. The church seems but little more than the plaything of social forces.

Though this is an exaggeration as exceptions prove, yet it is so close to the truth as to justify an effort to classify city churches in terms of the local population movements to which they have been subjected. Accepting Douglass' thesis that city churches are variants from the rural type, yet making change in neighborhood constituency basic to the classification, we list the following kinds of churches: the old family church, the old family church with endowment, the downtown platform church, the foreign language and bi-lingual church, the suburban church, the newer family church, the institutional church, and, farthest removed from the rural type, the church settlement.

Before attempting to describe and characterize churches of each of these types, we must consider the kinds of change in population which are likely to occur in cities. Foreign groups, Jewish groups, Negro groups may move into a white Protestant area. Business, including commercialized recreation, may move in. Loft buildings or factories may be constructed. There may be a rooming house development. High class apartment houses may come to occupy much of the area. Younger families may be replaced by completed families in an area partly given to rooming houses and middle-class apartments. Drastic change may be brought about by some

<sup>2</sup> Religious Education, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, April 1929, pp. 329-45.

federal or state or local housing project, involving slum clearance and the building of apartment houses offering excellent facilities at low cost.

Though the factors determining them are hard to discover, the movements themselves are easy to detect, often well in advance of their projection into a given neighborhood. It is the naive unawareness of these processes, the trustful blindness with which new building sites are chosen as older ones prove no longer tenable, which give proof of a type of other-worldliness in the churches not flattering to their intelligence.<sup>3</sup>

Population movements are, of course, no more than the surface manifestations of the deeper forces which direct and agitate the stream of social change. They challenge and coerce the churches into the more obvious and superficial adjustments by which we seek to classify them. Yet we must be careful again to note that at the core they are virtually unaltered, stressing worship, preaching, Sunday school, women's and young people's societies, much as does the rural church. Elsewhere in this book we try to measure the significance of this central resistance and to suggest constructive and creative modes of change within it. Let us now discover if we can the changes in emphasis and in the extension of activities which movements of population produce.

We must look first into the old family church, seeing it as it was in its strength, a neighborhood church in the midst of a city, its members and friends living around it, their children and youth attending, as a matter of course, its somewhat limited services. We find that it was a "fellowship of kindred minds" united by many shared interests and by the strong bond of a common faith. Always it stressed and strengthened man's sense of oneness with God and with his brothers and sisters in the Lord. It was narrow and provincial, with little concern for world events other than foreign missions, but within the narrow circle of the saved it was a permeating and formative influence. We must study it, too, as its members move away, driven out by a new population—foreign, Jewish or (if a white Protestant church) Negro or by rooming house folk, single or married and childless or with children grown and gone. Its property is so depreciated in value that to sell and

<sup>3</sup> *Vide*, for further discussion of this problem, pp. 159-160.

move is most unprofitable. Its members are scattered to the four winds, no major portion of them close enough together to be served by a new church building, were funds available to pay for its erection. And in the suburbs and "better" residential areas to which they have spread there are already churches in plenty and often one or more of the right denomination. What happens, therefore, is a slow attrition, a falling off in attendance and finance. First it strikes the Sunday school, which becomes a mockery of its old self, a little handful of children trying to forget of a Sunday morning the emptiness of the rows on rows of chairs behind them. Then the young people's society fades and dies. The mid-week prayer meeting finds literal use for the text "Where two or three are gathered together," struggles briefly to revive itself as "church night" with stereopticon lectures and forums and Bible study courses, then submits to the inevitable and dies. Slowly but surely the Sunday morning congregations dwindle. Once it had been hard to seat the strangers who came, since all the best pews were rented. Now the occasional visitor is pounced upon with cordial avidity, but is most often found to be a small town transient with a fixed habit of church attendance. Collections and pew rentals fall away alarmingly. The Board finds it necessary to dismiss the faithful and well informed church secretary and parish worker, to reduce the sexton's salary even further below a living wage (he must burn less coal this winter) and at length to cut the pastor's salary in each of three consecutive years. And the preacher, if he is wise, eagerly seeks another pulpit. If he is well past middle age he finds this difficult, and takes his ill luck philosophically. If he is young, he wrestles late in prayer, searching his own heart for the sources of his failure, trying to make his sermons more vital, their advertised titles more unique and arresting. With the evening service, before it finally dies, he takes every kind of novel liberty but can make little dent on urban sophistication and indifference. The denominational board is made to realize that something must be done. This church is added to the growing list of those receiving home missionary aid and year by year the amount is increased but the church grows steadily weaker. Then, to the relief of all but a few of the older members still holding on in the neighborhood, a Negro pastor, or was it a Jewish

rabbi, offers to buy the property—at a fair price all things considered. It will almost pay in full the first mortgage with accrued interest. For the minister another charge is found—the best that can be done under the circumstances. Both he and his reputation are somewhat worn. The members are transferred to other churches—at least those few are who respond favorably to the letter sent them suggesting such action. A good many are lost track of. Every year at Easter or Christmas it still happens that a few old members send small contributions to a church that no longer exists. The money goes to home missions.

More often all this awkwardness is obviated by uniting the now homeless church with the nearest of the same denomination. It is usually helpful to both for the second church too often needs reinforcement. Unfortunately the plan doesn't work too smoothly. There is a cleavage and some bitterness as well. Often only the faithful and strong-minded remnant really becomes active in the united church. Prerogatives, traditions, assets and liabilities must be transferred and reoriented. It is a strenuous task, straining Christian love to the breaking point or beyond. And all of it, every single phase, is the inevitable and inescapable outcome of a change in the population of a neighborhood, a change variously and obscurely caused, and rarely if ever halted or controlled by any individual or agency unfavorably affected by it.

The author was years ago waited upon by a committee from a once well-to-do church then on the outskirts of Negro Harlem. They asked him to recommend a minister to them, some outstanding pulpit orator. In reply to his inevitable query they said they would pay \$10,000 a year if necessary. Knowing the condition of the church, he showed surprise. The money, they said, had been offered by a friend of the church, a lady not a member whose very lovely home was on the same street. Negro congregations had been trying to buy the church. For obvious reasons this lady wanted to keep it white and to make and keep it strong. The plan failed.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Types of City Churches

WE HAVE BEEN listening to the sad story of the old family church that, faced by certain neighborhood changes, either dies or federates, tottering into the feeble arms of a sister congregation. There are hundreds of "down-town" churches to-day alive if none too well, which in their single corporate person are the union of five or six once separate and thriving institutions. They remind one of the old salt, sole survivor of a ship-wreck who, nourished by his companions as they died one by one, was fond of referring to himself as "the crew of the Nancy brig."

But not all of these old family churches federate or die. Sometimes a large endowment enables them to carry on in traditional ways though congregations be small and other income negligible. Nothing short of a social revolution could unbalance their books. Sometimes through foresight they sell out before the unfortunate change quite reaches them, and with the money build elsewhere. As a rule there is lacking both the wisdom and the will to do this for loyalty to neighborhood and to church stand in the way. It is when the change, though it drives members away, tremendously increases the value of the land on which the church is built, that the sale is made gladly. Then, wealthy beyond expectation, the officers build and even at times partly endow a new church in a distant, often suburban residential area. Old members not too far away to attend form the nucleus of a growing membership attracted by the new plant and perhaps the new and younger or better known minister.

But when, as in the Greater New York Metropolitan area, it is difficult to find favorable location for a new church and when the new subway or bus lines that help to account for the rise in land values make the church as never before easily accessible from scattered residential areas, the church does not move. It modifies

its program, metamorphosing itself into a platform and choosing as its minister a pulpit orator. However, more than this is required. He must preach with sincerity a gospel that has meaning and worth. The deeper his knowledge of humanity, the truer his spiritual perceptions, the more compelling will his oratory be. But a pulpit orator he must be who, aided by rapid transit, can draw the crowds. Without these transit facilities no orator can turn the trick. The so-called "carriage trade" is not in itself adequate to keep the church going. Without the really first rate orator (with the flair for publicity which such men have) bus and subway will carry the crowds somewhere else. This is the downtown platform church. It has no Sunday school it cares to speak of. Its work with children is confined to the poor and often non-Protestant boys and girls who, for what they get out of it, manage a little to overcome their feeling of strangeness as they engage in occasional week-day afternoon and early evening activities. The sexton sees to it that they feel and behave not too much at home. The building and its equipment were provided for other purposes and must be preserved intact. Its young people's work is feeble unless it develops forums, discussions and socials for the unattached youth who drift past its doors. They drift on again in any case, rarely becoming identified with the church as members. The church plant is therefore little used, save on Sundays, though the church auditorium is kept open "for prayer and meditation" during the week, with an occasional brief service conducted by the young assistant minister. Save for these peripheral activities, the platform church, judged by the number and range of its activities, would fall in the class "sub-rural." It represents the glorification of the pulpit. Unless it be heavily endowed it will fail and die under mediocre preaching. Good, and therefore often costly, music and an impressive building are essential aids to all but the most brilliant preachers and even they do not disdain them. Though their sermons are their own and worthy the setting given them these gifted men in their contact with the public have more in common with the famous actor than with the average minister in the average family church. Their performances are admired, studied and compared. Each has his enthusiastic following. Press and radio increase their fame and popularity. Indeed

radio puts them into active competition with professional actors and provides a huge following of folk drawn to the preacher by his message—rarely unemotional, and by his voice heard week after week in the intimate surroundings of the home. With the aid of television the radio preacher may well become the honored guest known and loved in a million homes.

There are three other types of churches which may be the outcome of adaptations made by the old family church in response to changing populations, the foreign language church, the institutional church and the church settlement. On the other hand these three types may be organized and built in foreign neighborhoods and in underprivileged areas generally, for the specific ends each tries to serve. The suburban church and the newer family church (which are further removed from the rural type than are the old family church, the down-town platform church and the foreign language church but are surpassed in this respect by the institutional church and the church settlement), are almost invariably built for the ends they serve, though perhaps by a congregation which has maintained an old family church in some now deteriorated area.

The foreign language church is made up either of foreigners of Protestant antecedents, like the German and Swedish Lutheran churches and the other "national groups" to which reference has been made, or it is a Protestant mission to Catholic or Jewish foreigners. In either case the church is likely to be bi-lingual since the reduction of immigration has resulted in greatly reducing the number of members who use only their native tongue and in increasing the demand for services in English especially for the youth whose command of the mother tongue is very limited.

Foreign language churches ministering to Protestants preserve the Old World traditions to a marked degree and in a measure the Old World loyalties. Insofar as they succeed in holding the younger generation, most of them born here and "Americanized" in our schools and on our streets, they serve as a bond between parents and children, aiding the difficult process of transition. Often however, parental religion and parental authority are inseparable and youth revolts against both. These churches, aside from their preoccupation with this struggle for an adjustment



which will preserve the old and interpret the new, are not far removed from the family church. Their constituencies are usually grouped around them and religion is treasured as a strong bond of fellowship in the midst of a strange community.

The mission to non-Protestants as a rule makes a wider appeal, using clubs, classes, entertainments and parties as a means of attracting otherwise hostile folk. Their pastors are usually converted Catholics, sometimes ex-priests or quondam students for the priesthood, and the intensity of their devotion to Protestantism is often unfortunately equalled by the intensity of their dislike of the faith they have renounced. They are likely to be strongly evangelistic and unless the home missions board requires it and provides leadership for it, are likely to minimize the importance of week-day activities which have not a specifically religious emphasis. Though it is claimed for these churches that they reach chiefly the unchurched who have drifted away from the church of Rome or the synagogue, there is reason to conclude that it is the good Catholics and the good Jews who make the good Protestants, not those who have grown indifferent to religion in every form. Further these churches find it difficult to hold the young people whom they have trained up, for too often the older folk and the minister seem foreigners to these young Americans. Weaned from the mother church they find sustenance neither in the mission nor in the American Protestant churches to whose members they appear foreign.

The institutionalized church was developed in this country as an adaptation of the settlement movement and as an answer to the enigma confronted by the old family church in a neighborhood overrun with "foreigners." Partly it was a protest against the failure of the settlement to give religion the significance it was felt to deserve. The souls as well as the bodies of these unfortunate poor must be saved. Further it gave point and expression to the Social Gospel as it was being proclaimed by such leaders as Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch. It was vitally practical and helpful in congested city areas disgracefully neglected. So triumphantly did it seem to solve the problem of the slum-encompassed family church that wealthy churches began soon to found and to build missions planned and equipped like the

Y.M.C.A.s and the settlements to cope with the varied needs of the poor.

There are to be distinguished four rather different attitudes toward non-Protestant constituencies on the part of these institutionalized churches. Some make the church emphasis central and open gymnasium, workshop and swimming pool only to those who are directly sharing in church or Sunday school or Young People's Society meetings and regularly contributing to the church. Others quite frankly declare their primary concern to be the growth of the church and virtually serve notice to all and sundry that, if they come to gymnasium or club or other secular activity, they will be tactfully urged to attend church or Sunday school as well. A third group, while stressing their specifically religious activities, agree to make no overt effort to proselytize those who desire only secular pursuits. A fourth, and these constitute what we have called the church settlement, put so much less of time and money into definitely religious programs that they are not readily differentiated from the settlements save by the nature of their antecedents and the source of their support. They rouse little antagonism among Catholic authorities and reach a wider constituency as a result.

The arguments for and against proselytization in terms of its social effects are numerous and often heated. Since this function of organized religion is a factor both in creating certain prevalent attitudes toward the church and in conditioning the church's response to the demands of the present and future, it is perhaps wise to offer certain comments upon its operation in those Protestant city churches which offer to serve non-Protestants.

We have noted that from the beginning religion has concerned itself with the relation between man and Spirit both for the joy found in that relationship and for the sake of the power that prayer and ritual released to man's service. Through every stage in our brief survey of organized religion's beginnings and growth this emphasis has been found. It is therefore fair to conclude that the primary function of organized religion is to provide communion between man and God, to the end that divine power may be won and used to serve man's needs and to satisfy his spiritual hungers.

In modern times there has developed a variety of contending religious organizations, each holding itself to have found the right connection, to be pointing the one way of salvation. Historically these warring groups have always sought to convert one another's followers though, within Protestantism, professional ethics forbids open proselytism between denominations. This effort is quite consistent with their expressed belief that theirs is the one way to be saved.

Organized religion, especially of Protestant brands, has developed a rich variety of services to the physical, social and recreational needs of children and youth and even of adults. Social settlements and community centers have however preceded the churches in developing such services and have in most respects surpassed them. By virtually ignoring religious differences and espousing no particular religious creed, these agencies appeal to neighbors of every or of no faith. Non-Protestants, noting the Protestant lay control of many of these settlements and their similarity to the institutional churches, have frequently though wrongly concluded that the settlement is but a more subtle and hypocritical form of Protestant proselytization.

The most highly developed forms of church social service are found in areas of greatest social need. It is, in most cities of America, the later immigrants of non-Protestant stock who occupy these areas.

If the effort to proselytize Catholics and Jews to Protestantism is justifiable, the churches are within their rights in using social services as a demonstration of their Christian spirit and as a means of "saving" those outside the true faith.

There is however no sound ethical defense of the practice of concealing the proselytizing motive behind the social services nor of the practice of bartering those services in return for some form of identification of these non-Protestants with Protestant church activities. Both practices cheapen and degrade the church and what it represents.

Where church social service activity exempt from these practices already exists in needy areas not likely to be served by other agencies it would seem defensible to continue to utilize the build-

ing, financial resources and leadership while the need remains otherwise unmet; in most instances it would be better to transform the church into a strictly non-religious community center did this not deprive it of funds.

The Protestant church commits a serious blunder when it organizes a center for Protestant social service in a non-Protestant community—unless proselytization be its announced goal and social service a means to that end. This involves the rather narrow theological belief that Protestantism or some particular brand of it is the one way of salvation or, at least, a way so much better than any other as to merit so arduous an endeavor.

If a Protestant church desires to engage in social service as an end in itself and as a friendly service to non-Protestant folk in need, it should do so through the contribution of funds to a secular agency of social service. Naturally there can be no restrictive criticism of the effort of a church to serve the social needs of its own members—provided always that so far as possible it guard against the tendency to use those services as lure or reward for participation in the more strictly religious activities.

The suburban church is usually in a privileged community. It is well equipped, therefore, and emphasizes in addition to good preaching and good music a variety of educational, social and recreational activities. It is as a rule not so highly developed in these latter respects as is the institutionalized church. It is a family church with a well organized Sunday school, a gymnasium, club rooms and other such facilities. It is distinguished by the peculiarities of its social environment. The suburb is neither self-contained nor self-sufficient. It is urban in spirit and viewpoint. A majority of its adult males commute to the nearby city. There the money is earned and there much of it is spent. Loyalties and responsibilities are divided. The city's shopping and amusement centers and its charities as well make their demands. In the suburb social life is highly organized. The church has its place but it is not a central one. It competes with country club, road-house and local movie, with High School athletics and socials and dances, with Y.M. and Y.W.C.A., and with the many attractions of the city. Organized religion in the suburbs is highly competitive,

notably adapted to the demands of an educated and sophisticated constituency, maintaining itself well as a part of the pattern of community life and of its social relationships. But the pattern is complex and the church is far from its center. The suburban church whose constituency is made up largely of clerical and other workers in the lower income ranges is characterized by inadequate facilities and resources. On this account and because many of its members are commuters it usually has a restricted range of activities, not unlike those of the rural church.

The newer family church, more numerous in medium sized cities than in metropolitan centers, is one that has a majority of its constituency in its neighborhood but is not satisfied with the narrow traditional program of the old family church. It is planned and staffed for a varied range of activities. The church service and the Sunday school, women's groups, men's groups, young people's groups, athletics in the gymnasium, clubs and classes, forums and discussions, dances, card parties, dramatics, hikes and trips,—all these will be discovered. The bonds of friendship are relatively strong, loyalty is high, the minister respected and honored and the church itself is functionally related to many of the interests of its people. They are not wealthy, nor are they poor. They have interests and recreations outside the church altogether, but to a surprising and encouraging degree they find the church the center of neighborhood life. Many of their neighbors are not Protestants, many go to other Protestant churches. But their own church folk find themselves drawn together by a church alert to their interests, responsive to their needs and dependent upon their support, both personal and financial. The newer family church has for a certain constituency gone far in pioneering to discover what the church of to-day and of to-morrow might be and do in cities too large to be homogeneous but where neighborhood spirit may still be found.

And so we conclude our hasty review of types of churches in America from the sub-rural to the church settlement. That they greatly serve their people we cannot doubt. That in many instances they might serve them better we are sure. But we have learned how many are the forces which press in upon these churches. We have discovered to how overwhelming an extent they are depend-

ent upon the accidents of their environment. "As goes the community, so goes the church."

In the chapters that follow we seek answer to the question--What may be said on the other side? What have the churches done, and what may they yet do which may a little hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God?



## PART III

### The Church as the Cause of Social Change





## CHAPTER XIV

### The Church and the World

THAT SOME FORM of interaction exists between the church and its environment is obvious. No such institution could be entirely passive and receptive. Thus far we have been chiefly concerned to discover what in its early and basic structure and function religion was and how it has been modified by the play of social forces upon it. Difficult as this task has been, to reverse the process is even harder. For the church is but one of a multitude of factors operating over the whole range of history and in every sphere of life.

Obviously, the approach must be through the church itself in the effort to trace the influence of certain of its beliefs and practices. In this chapter the emphasis is upon the varying theological concepts of the church in its relation to the world in general. The following chapter discusses the more immediate and pressing problems of church and state. The next chapter attempts a summary answer to the question, what, on the whole, has history to say of the church as a cause of social change?

Christians the world over pray—"Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven." This is at once a confession of man's sins and an expression of man's hopes of salvation. To some who offer the prayer, it seems obvious that God's Kingdom has not come because God's Will has not been done and conversely, that doing God's Will would bring in His Kingdom. To others, less sanguine, it appears that so great a gap is fixed between the sinfulness of man and the goodness of God that it cannot be bridged, save from the Godward side. The Social Gospel, which came to overt expression in America toward the close of the nineteenth century, finds its main support among those who believe that man is the chief instrument of the Divine Will, that religion is a way of life, that the godly man must work

out his own and his neighbor's salvation. The coming of the Kingdom must wait upon man's more devout and effectual efforts to bring it in. Religion is thus conceived as being primarily the means of social change in the direction of that Kingdom.

With this conclusion the second group profoundly disagree. Man's chief end is "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." In the fulness of time the Kingdom will come. Man absurdly glorifies himself in the assumption that by his busyness in works of social service and "reform" he can bring in the Kingdom. Furthermore, he grossly exaggerates man's "natural" goodness, the perfectibility of human nature by human means. The Barthian theology is in essence a protest against the bland assumption that man is by nature equipped to save himself, or, of himself, to find out truth. God is "wholly other." Truth is not discovered, but "given." Man is altogether without power.<sup>1</sup>

In general agreement with this emphasis though not with the Barthian theology in its entirety is a brilliant group of scholars, European and American, including Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr and Nicolas Berdyaev. In spite of many disagreements they are united in their pessimism as to the effectiveness of human efforts at reform, in their belief in a salvation which can come only as God breaks into the world, and in the conviction that Truth comes by revelation rather than by the efforts of human intelligence.

As representative of the opposing position, though less extreme than the easy liberalism of the Social Gospel, is a less romantic realism which insists upon facing the hard facts of human sinfulness and unregenerateness, but refuses to admit the impossibility of man's effective effort as a co-worker with God in the bringing in of His Kingdom, this faith in man including as well a faith in his ability by his own effort to learn about God through his natural powers of observation and of intellect.<sup>2</sup>

There are, of course, many varieties of viewpoint within and between the opposing positions here briefly indicated. Theological

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, Barth, Karl, *God in Action*, Translated by E. G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst (N. Y., Round Table Press, 1936).

<sup>2</sup> *Vide*, for an admirable presentation of this general viewpoint, Horton, Walter M., *Realistic Theology* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1934).

discussion must be limited to its service to our quest for a better understanding of the extent to which the church is a factor in producing social change. Clearly, it is under the aegis of the latter group that the church is most likely to seek so to function. Though there are those in the former group who believe that the church has been and again may be a channel by means of which the eternal breaks through upon the temporal. None the less it is in the areas of effort of the realistic theologians, in the sense in which Horton uses the term, that the practical problems of church and world relationship chiefly arise. If the church is to be a means of the world's salvation, it cannot afford to hold itself aloof from the life about it. It must in some measure identify itself with the world, else it cannot save it. With this truth in mind Shirley Jackson Case urges the modern church to take example from the methods of compromise whereby the ancient church won to social triumph that in our age it may be restored to power.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand H. Richard Niebuhr declares that the church's peril lies in the fact that "the church has adjusted itself too much rather than too little to the world in which it lives." He feels it to be the all-important task of the Christian community to define and take its position against the world.<sup>4</sup> But we must not misunderstand him to hold the church impotent against the world, useless to combat its evils. Its present weakness lies in its being "a church which seeks to prove its usefulness to civilization, in terms of civilization's own demands."<sup>5</sup> For "If the church has no other plan of salvation to offer to men than one of deliverance by force, education, idealism or planned economy, it really has no existence as a church and needs to resolve itself into a political party or a school."<sup>6</sup>

Insofar as this represents a condemnation of a trend toward naturalistic humanism whereby the church in its effort to save the world turns from God to methods of social amelioration and reform, we must agree with it. Repeatedly we have stressed the

<sup>3</sup> *The Social Triumph of the Ancient Church* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1933), Chapter V, especially pp. 207-8, 227-8.

<sup>4</sup> Niebuhr, Pauck, and Miller, *The Church Against the World* (Chicago and N. Y., Willett, Clark & Co., 1935), pp. 11, 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

fact that religion in its essence has always been the response of man to spiritual reality. The objective reality of Spirit is the only thesis which can make religion rational. Religion cannot surrender to the natural and the social sciences its sense of the Divine Purpose and Guidance, and remain religion. But to react so violently against its tendency to do this as to deny that human intelligence has any significant function in the redemption of the world seems indefensible. It can be explained perhaps in terms of that false dualism which places the phenomena of religion entirely outside the realm of law and condemns as futile man's efforts to arrive at any understanding of God's Truth by scientific means. Yet to love the Lord not alone with heart and soul and strength, but with *mind* as well, would seem to involve intellectual effort.

Pride of intellect through the glorification of its fruits makes for a human self-sufficiency absurd and pathetic in the face of life's unsolved problems. God remains man's greatest need. The church that fails in some measure to meet that need fails utterly. But the church so absorbed in the worship of God as to forget to embody the active and compassionate love of Christ for all those who suffer, worships a God unknown to Jesus. The one emphasis is as essential as is the other.

In every effort to appraise the relation of the church to social change it is necessary to define the sense in which the term church is to be used. If its obvious meaning be taken, then the church is the great body of church members. And surely it would be naive and absurd to expect the members of the churches to be in advance of the majority of the population in any social movement. For this the reason is obvious,—church members are the majority of the population. They cannot be in advance of themselves. It follows that when we speak of the church and the community or the church and the state or the church and any other social group they are not in fact the separate and distinct entities our words make them appear to be. They will often as organizations have quite different objectives but as groups of persons they will usually overlap. Thus the church and the state represent the organizational forms through which in the main the same people perform two different sets of functions. Sociologically speaking the

church can never be against society. It is society in one of its characteristic expressions. Institutional conflict is thus more often a conflict between men's desires than between separate and distinct groups of men. It is confusing but usually true that many of the same folk are enlisted in both the embattled armies. Even the members of mutually exclusive groups, like Republicans and Democrats, belong to the same church or club. Their mutual hostility in one relationship may but little affect their fellowship in another. Only when the issues are major ones and sharply drawn is there a clear choice of allegiances and an absence of overlap.

We have traced the quite separate beginnings of religion and of morals and noted the later projection upon the gods of man's moral insights. We surely need not accept this as proving that the projection has been and is altogether in one direction,—from man toward God. Nor need we take the opposite view, of those who believe that man can in no wise save himself. The liberal theologian may take a position between the two extremes, believing that God is revealing His purposes and therefore His nature, as man progressively gains the ability to understand them and that, in this sense at least, man works out his own salvation. But whatever school of theology be invoked, the social fact remains that there is a close relationship between organized religion and the prevailing morals of society. True, not all churches agree as to the right and the wrong in social behavior. Certain religious codes are "notoriously" rigid and narrow, others "shamefully" broad. But, by and large, it is still true, as in primitive societies, that religion lends its sanction to certain generally accepted behaviors and that it frowns upon efforts to change them, both in the direction of new behaviors and in the direction of any relaxation of accepted codes. The former may be illustrated by the opposition of the Catholic church to the dissemination of information about birth control, the latter by the activities of the Catholic Legion of Decency to prevent the degeneration of public morals through indecent moving pictures and other forms of commercialized recreation.

The virtual identification of morality with religion, such that every moral issue is at the same time a religious one and the

assumption that every public issue has moral significance make it inevitable that however aloof from the world, the church must yet exert an influence upon it. Since in the realm of individual action it is likewise claimed that "we are members one of another," no man living or dying unto himself, and every individual act having its effect for good or ill upon society, it would seem that all of life is subject to the authority of religion. This would be readily admitted even by those who as of the company of the saved would keep themselves unspotted from the world. But they would wait on the Will of God to bring this desired condition to pass.

There exists a basic distinction between Protestantism and Catholicism as to the nature of religious authority. The former places ultimate responsibility for moral behavior upon the individual conscience, the latter upon individual conscience as guided and instructed by the church. It is of course this difference which makes it possible for the Catholic hierarchy to require all good Catholics to conform to announced standards while the Protestant churches upon other than creedal issues can do no more than make an appeal to conscience. Thus also it is apparent that the free discussion of moral issues upon which the church has ruled can have no place in Catholicism while in Protestantism, which claims no final authority in such matters, free and full discussion is, theoretically at least, of vital importance to a sound and intelligent morality. Undoubtedly there has been exercised a strong degree of compulsion in the organization of Catholics to boycott certain films designated by the church as indecent or improper. And the weakness of Protestant support of this needed reform in default of an intelligent concern over the issue has been due primarily to the absence of any recognized moral authority in those churches, the authority of Scripture being but rarely and ineffectually invoked in these days. There can be no doubt whatever that the Catholic church by virtue of its authoritarianism is in proportion to its numerical strength a far more powerful instrument of social control than is Protestantism. By the same token it is, potentially at least, a more powerful instrument of social change.

What Catholicism can do by fiat Protestantism can do only by

education of a sort that leads to intelligent corporate social action. As elsewhere indicated, Protestantism has largely failed to create the educational means to this end. Instead it has attempted weakly to imitate Catholicism in issuing pronouncements largely futile because they have behind them neither the force of authority nor the support of an informed and an aroused constituency. The appeal to conscience on the basis of facts, sound reasoning upon them and action motivated by strong feelings of loyalty to ends believed to accord with God's Will,—this seems the method more congenial to a democracy. Lacking that method in any adequate form, Protestantism is in large measure impotent either to control or to modify the social scene.

Beyond question the creed influences action. The conceptual relationship between the church and the world inevitably modifies the actual. On the other hand, whatever the theology, certain forces are operative. Man is a social animal. Though the church stand against the world it is at the same time in it and of it, its members integrally a part of other and worldly groups, sharing in their aims and interests and of necessity compromising religious ideals to mundane requirements. And the church itself, whatever its claim of kinship with the Church Invisible, is a social institution among institutions as part of a complex pattern of community life. And the moral code held by the brethren to be the Will of God inescapably reflects the prevailing morals of the community and of the nation, which in their turn are partly the product of social change through such factors as discovery and invention. Indeed, even the creed itself is usually best understood in terms not of theological controversy but of the social and economic conditions and needs of its believers.

Thus it may be concluded that the church confronts the world with a variety of interest and of concern for its well-being. From the completely naturalistic viewpoint it is no more than one of many institutions, creature of its social and temporal environment and reacting upon it. That it centers its behaviors around a naive belief in the existence of Spirit and in the power of Spirit to modify earthly affairs distinguishes but does not fundamentally change it. It is a complex social organization whose aims and functions are to be explained and understood altogether in terms



of mundane data, among which must be included its quite primitive beliefs.

From this angle, shared by many of the so-called humanist churches, there can be no true sense in which the church is apart from or against the world or in which it has a peculiar function to save the world. In the humanist church its members find mutual aid in discovering, developing, formulating, and applying those social values which seem to them significant. They pretend to no mediumship, to the control and release of no super-mundane powers. They are in the world and of it, though their aims may distinguish them from the majority of their fellows in terms of belief.

But obviously, all this is to the "true believer" a parody of the meaning and function of organized religion. Insisting that spiritual Reality is a datum of experience, he denies that religion can be said to exist apart from Spirit. Within the bounds of religion thus defined, he admits of varying theories as to the conditions governing the operations of Spiritual Power and man's relations with it. The salvation of man in the coming of the Kingdom of God through the mediation of Jesus is the end anticipated,—“God in Christ reconciling the world.” In those churches in which it is believed that this end may be hastened through the efforts of men there has been and is a strong tendency to reinforce whatever in the social scheme seems to accord with Christian values and to endorse certain efforts at reform through social legislation. On the other hand, churches which believe that salvation is of God and that the elect must await His good pleasure, are less prone to concern themselves with community or state, either to pass judgment upon or to seek to modify their behavior. In the following chapter the bearing of theology upon practice is illustrated in a discussion of the relations between church and state.

## CHAPTER XV

### The Church and the State

**I**N SPITE OF the persistence from the beginnings of Christianity to the present of certain conflict between individuals whose fortunes were closely identified with one or the other group, the fact remains that, since Constantine, church and state have in overwhelming preponderance been the closest of collaborators and colleagues in the exercise of social control in the direction of conservation and in the direction of change.

Indeed it is impossible rightly to estimate the influence of the church upon social change without consideration of the church as collaborator with the state in such processes of change as the declaration and prosecution of war, including wars of conquest and the passing of legislation for the improvement and control of morals.

The prevailing situation in the United States is neither that of a Calvinistic theocracy nor of a Lutheran state church.<sup>1</sup> It is merely that, excepting the "lunatic fringe" of the cults, church and state in most matters of importance see eye to eye, because their interests coincide. And this is natural enough in a democracy in which the majority of the citizens who by their vote "control" the state are members of the church.

The liaison between church and state in America has been mutually beneficial. Closer in colonial Massachusetts and Virginia than at any time since, for there the relation was legalized, it has constituted a partnership in which neither has been called upon to sacrifice self-interest in the service of the other. The church's fortunes have been so closely identified with those of the state that she could ill afford to refuse her support in time of war or other crisis. The state has not been obligated to interfere in matters of theological controversy. The subsidy granted

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, pp. 109-110.

the church through tax exemption, while considerable, is not excessive in view of favors received. They remain sovereign entities. As such they combine admirably in the main, but where interests conflict, they clash inevitably. And it is not unlikely that in America as in Germany, Russia, Mexico, Italy and Spain, issues may arise which because they challenge sovereignty, are of more significance than the many interests held in common.

In preceding chapters we have touched indirectly upon certain aspects of the conflict between church and state. Our concern in this chapter must be with the extent to which the relationship has affected the influence of religion upon social change. The totalitarian state reduces religion to a subordinate rôle in the regulation of human conduct. The Catholic theory of the church places it above all other institutions in influence and authority. In America the separation of church and state is in fact an effort to end the conflict by separating the combatants. It has not succeeded as the *Macintosh* case bears conclusive witness. As is well known, Professor Macintosh, a Canadian who had served as a chaplain in the Great War was denied citizenship by a five to four decision of the Supreme Court because of his expressed unwillingness "to support the government in waging a war which his conscience might condemn as unjust."<sup>2</sup> To permit this exercise of private conscience would be to undermine the lawful authority of the state. Though the state has exempted from military service the members of those religious organizations which, like the Quakers and the Mennonites, are historically and definitely committed to pacifism on religious grounds, it has refused to grant similar exemption to individuals not members of such groups whose conscience forbids participation in war, though the Congregational and Methodist denominations have requested this exemption for those of their number who in time of peace officially register their pacifist convictions. Thus the Protestant theory of the supremacy of the individual conscience is in this particular nullified by the state. Conversely the Protestant theory in its ultimate implication subordinates the state to the church as guided by the conscience of believers.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, William Adams, *Church and State in Contemporary America* (N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 20.

In Secaucus, New Jersey, two girls, aged eight and eleven, have been expelled from the public school because, being with their parents members of Jehovah's Witnesses, they have refused for religious reasons to salute the flag or recite the oath of allegiance. The Supreme Court of the state has upheld their expulsion.<sup>3</sup> The United States Supreme Court may next hear the case.

Protestant divisiveness makes a clear statement of the Protestant position all but impossible. This difficulty is exaggerated by the diversity of practice within denominational groups and even within single denominations. With the possible exception of the Lutherans all agree in putting the individual conscience in supremacy over the state. Yet where specific reference is made to civil authority obedience to it is in general enjoined.

The Lutheran position differs fundamentally from that of other Protestant bodies. Professor Paul Tillich thus explains "the Lutheran conception of the relation of the religious to the political realm. Between these two Luther created a deep gulf. According to him it is not permissible to level criticism at the government of the state or to disobey its commands in any political matter, even supposing the government should be bad and its laws wrong and its ruling unjust or arbitrary. For all governments, even bad ones, are invested by God with power to oppress the evil which always resides in human nature. Of course the bearer of governmental power is obliged by his conscience to rule in accordance with the dictates of natural justice and, whenever possible, of Christian love. But this is a matter which exclusively concerns his own relation to God. Christian people are never right in entering protests against any ruler, not even when dealing with revolution. They have the duty to suffer and the permission to pray to God for the ruler, who in every case enjoys his rule by the incomprehensible good pleasure and providence of God."<sup>4</sup>

Yet it would be unfair to conclude that Lutheranism entirely divorces itself from affairs of state. It believes that social ills are traceable to unregenerate human nature and that the church is responsible for the spiritual regeneration of men. It believes that Christian principles should be clearly enunciated but it does not

<sup>3</sup> *Vide*, The New York Times, January 18, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Information Service, Vol. XIII, No. 19, May 12, 1934.

believe that the church should endorse a specific piece of legislation even though it conforms to those principles.

The Catholic position is clearly set forth in the bull *Unam sanctam* of Boniface VIII in 1302: "By the words of the gospel we are taught that the two swords, namely the spiritual authority and the temporal, are in the power of the church. . . . Therefore if the temporal power errs, it will be judged by the spiritual power, and if the lower spiritual power errs, it will be judged by the superior. But if the highest spiritual power errs, it cannot be judged by men but by God alone."

This clearly establishes the Catholic theory of the supremacy of the church, to which the individual conscience is subject. Since the power of the sovereign emanates from God, it is the duty of the subject to obey the civil authority save in cases of extreme and habitual tyranny which repudiate the divine sanction and justify rebellion. However, not to the individual but to the church belongs the right to declare that such a case exists.

Though there is now no truly Catholic state, the Catholic doctrine presupposes it. It merely reconciles itself temporarily to existing states, in this country preferring the separation of church and state to a situation in which Protestantism might be the official religion. In the Catholic state, the ruler as a good Catholic would be in spiritual matters subject to the church. The church would endorse civil obedience. Harmony would be established in all their relationships.

Undoubtedly the separation of church and state has been beneficial in America. A new country populated by so great a variety of faiths and traditions could have made no wiser decision. It has meant a greater degree of liberty for all and the virtual absence of religious persecution. But beyond question it has contributed to the secularization of American life. By eliminating religion from government, through Constitutional provision that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States,"<sup>5</sup> religious freedom was assured, but at the same time by inference religion was adjudged a non-essential to the performance of the gravest of social responsibilities. Quite consistently both the presidential and the congressional oaths of

<sup>5</sup> The Constitution of the United States, Section 6, ¶3.

office omit all reference to Deity. This is especially notable since both in the English and in the colonial oaths of office reference to God was traditional.

The elimination of the teaching of religion from the public schools and from tax-supported colleges and universities has been a major cause of the decline of religion. With the extension of the school day to include a rich variety of extra-curricular activities, the church that would in a measure meet the religious needs of public school children by similar activities under religious auspices, finds its efforts blocked. The plan of week-day religious instruction upon school time but in the churches has not on the whole proven a success. In some instances college courses in comparative religions and in Christianity offered as history or philosophy have served to inform if not to enthuse or to convert. The Catholic church is finding its solution of this vexed problem through the parochial school, though Catholic parents are not thereby exempted from the public school tax. To the great majority of American children education for life does not include religious education. And Sunday school attendance is rapidly declining.<sup>6</sup>

It is likewise true that the separation of church and state has put a premium upon strongly centralized and authoritarian churches as instruments of social control. The social influence of Catholicism is greater because, in "a Protestant country,"<sup>7</sup> the churches of Protestantism are unable to speak with a single voice.

Furthermore, though church and state are separated under the law, they are, in spite of their very friendly informal partnership, at conflict in matters so basic to each, that separation cannot fairly be said to have avoided the major difficulties developed in countries where church and state are wed. For it remains true that the United States as a Protestant country is proud of its tradition and hostile to sign or symptom of the intrusion of Catholic or Jewish control into certain areas of the nation's life and business. The Ku Klux Klan remains a shameful symbol of religious bigotry and intolerance in the name of American patriotism.

In time of war no state church could prove more coöperative with government than have the churches and synagogues of Amer-

<sup>6</sup> *Vide*, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> *Vide*, pp. 74-75.

ica. Pacifism is popular only when the threat of war is vague. In spite of extensive effort to promote peace through the churches there is no doubt but that in the next war as in the last and in all that preceded it, the church will become a recruiting station and a loudspeaker to rouse patriotism through the righteous condemnation of the foe and the assurance of divine benediction upon our forces in their exploits on sea and land and in the air. Considering the awful devastation of war, one might safely conclude that the church bids fair to exert its strongest influence for social change as the "buddy" of Government in the business of human slaughter.

There are other areas of public life and interest within which the church and the state are brought together. For example, let us take politics.

Does the church belong in politics? Lutherans, as we know, answer in the negative. Stanley High says it does <sup>8</sup> and quotes many distinguished men to the same effect. Politics and the standards of social justice are interdependent. With corrupt political life justice is corrupted. It is the task of the church to enter politics and purify it. Likewise it is the task of the church to take sides on political issues involving human welfare. Has the minister, then, the right and duty to support from the pulpit one candidate against another? Yes, say some, if a clear moral issue is involved. And who is to determine its clarity? In Protestantism the minister of course. And what if he be mistaken or if his partisanship antagonize a number of his congregation, come to worship God?

The minister of a congregational church in New England during the Great War refused to allow the American flag to fly above the church on Communion Sunday. Not even loyalty to the nation at war should be allowed to supersede loyalty to God and there were in the community some Christians whose loyalty to the nation was in doubt, since they were of German origin.

It would seem clear that the minister of Christ should be free to follow his own conscience in public utterance. Yet he cannot escape the fact that distinction is made between his expressions of private opinion outside the pulpit and his public pronouncements from it. Under whatever creedal system, the minister's words have an official significance. Does the solution lie in the declaration of

<sup>8</sup> High, Stanley, *The Church in Politics* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1930).

basic principles only, thus allowing the individual worshipper to consult his conscience in making application of principles to concrete and specific situations? Surely it is very hard to follow such a rule consistently. The clever preacher can without technically breaking the rule be very precise by implication. On the other hand insofar as he remains properly vague his preaching is likely to be of little significance. Says Bishop McConnell:—"Teachers and preachers of abstract truth were common enough in the days of Jesus. We seldom hear about them simply because their teachings made little practical difference. Jesus came under fire not because His enemies misunderstood Him, but because they understood Him."<sup>9</sup> Nor is it possible to solve the problem in terms of a ministry altogether of consolation and of comfort. Though it is the primary task of the church to strengthen man's consciousness of God, such preaching unrelieved by specific reference to Christian duties in concrete situations reduces the church to inane fatuity. There are times to speak and times to keep silent. The choice between them must be left to the minister himself. It would seem that the majority chiefly err not through speech but through silence.

Truly the minister is deserving of sympathy for he can hardly escape the dilemma of his office. Is he prophet or priest, reformer or educator? Does he serve the church by antagonizing its more influential members? Does he serve it by accomplishing his own expulsion from its pulpit? However urgent the issue, be it race or war or labor strike, is it not his task to offer to both sides the consolations of religion? Must he not so conduct himself as to maintain his influence and prestige in the community? By finding the easy answers to these questions, many continue to hold their pulpits but have surrendered all they have to preach about in order to keep the privilege of preaching. Others, finding the hard answers have been forced out of the church and of its ministry. The majority find answers which neither force them from the church nor entirely rob them of their message.

Certainly it is significant that in many Protestant churches the minister is financially dependent upon those men in his com-

<sup>9</sup> McConnell, Francis J., *Humanism and Christianity* (N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 89.



munity who are least likely to approve any criticism of the existing economic order. Likewise it is significant for the spiritual and ethical pilgrimage of the average minister that he and his family are brought into most intimate and continuous contact with the more "influential" families of the church. One valid test of the adequacy of the Protestant church as an instrument of social reform is the fate of the young ministers who seek intelligently so to use it. In the past twenty years the author has known many such men. He must conclude that it is a very small minority indeed who are forced out of the church and many of these for reasons personal rather than social; that another slightly larger group remain, but always self-condemned by a socially enforced conservatism which until past middle age they hope some day to be able to discard; but that the vast majority in the first five years of their ministry become quite happily adjusted to the standards of their constituencies, thereafter making only minor efforts to rouse a divine discontent with the established order, but instead strongly attacking those personal sins in general frowned upon and offering the consolations and assurances of faith and love to offset the sufferings, the difficulties, the bereavements and disillusionments which are in some degree the lot of all men. "What the churches want in a minister is essentially a successful salesman for their enterprise. . . . It is leadership in things as they are and adaptability to conditions as they stand rather than innovative or prophetic leadership that is demanded." <sup>10</sup>

The problem is acute not alone for the minister but also for the denomination he represents. For example, by what defensible methods can any denomination of Protestantism put itself on record as favorable to a particular piece of proposed legislation? It is conceivable that it might if by actual vote of its members it was found that a majority favored such action. But this is rarely done. Instead, the action is taken in loosely representative bodies, often as part of a busy schedule of organizational and administrative matters. Rarely is the action fully discussed. Invariably there is a convinced minority. And the local churches whose "representa-

<sup>10</sup> Douglass and Brunner, *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1935), p. 105.

tives" have ostensibly committed them have had little or no chance to study the issue or to express their judgment upon it in advance. It is therefore perhaps only natural that they should repudiate or ignore the action taken—if it be brought to their attention at all.

The history of the social gospel in America is the history of the endeavors of a very small group of liberal leaders to inspire the mass of church members with, and to commit them to, a social idealism which challenges the injustice and the inequality of our industrialized civilization. Few of these leaders, however, have questioned its essential principles. Protestantism, at least, is too much in the Calvinistic tradition to see that the issues raised, if allowed their fullest implication, would undermine the foundations of capitalism. Melioration through Christian sympathy has been the aim of the social gospel, not basic reform.<sup>11</sup>

Although in the last quarter of the nineteenth century there were stirrings of protest against injustice and exploitation, it was not until 1907, with the publication of Walter Rauschenbusch's "Christianity and the Social Crisis," that the movement became significant. In the following year the Methodist Federation for Social Service was organized as was the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which, at its first meeting, adopted "the social creed of the churches." At the Quadrennial Meeting of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America in December, 1932, a revised social creed, the "Social Ideals of the Churches," was adopted. The seventeen articles in which these ideals are summarized are introduced by the phrase "The Churches Should<sup>12</sup> Stand For" and deal with the acquisition, use and distribution of wealth, the social control of economic processes, the improvement of conditions of labor, the advocacy of "the single standard of purity" and of "educational preparation for marriage," of economic justice and cultural opportunities in rural areas, the protection of society against intoxicants and habit-forming drugs, "the reform of penal and correctional methods," equal justice for all without discrimination between racial, economic, and religious

<sup>11</sup> *Vide*, Visser'T Hooft, W. A., *The Background of the Social Gospel in America* (Haarlem, H. D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1928), Chapters I and II.

<sup>12</sup> In the first "Social Creed" this word 'Should' was omitted.

groups, the repudiation of war, and the recognition of the rights of "free speech, free assembly, and a free press."<sup>13</sup>

The Catholic church in America through the National Catholic Welfare Conference has provided both leadership and influence in a variety of social issues. The Conference, organized in 1919, "is a common agency acting under the authority of the bishops to promote the welfare of the Catholics of the country." It has for its incorporated purposes "unifying, coordinating, and organizing the Catholic people of the United States in works of education, social welfare, immigrant aid and other activities." Its Department of Social Action "covers the fields of Industrial Relations, Citizenship, Social Work, Family Life and Rural Welfare."<sup>14</sup> Outstanding among its pronouncements have been the "Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction" and the "Bishops' Pastoral Letter," both issued in 1919. These include pronouncements upon a minimum wage level, a living wage, for women equal pay with men for equal work, child labor, national labor exchanges, insurance against illness, unemployment and old age, the right of labor to organize, supplemented by conferences of employers and employees, the participation of labor in the control of industry, arbitration of labor disputes, the government regulation of monopoly, the modification of the capitalist system in the interest of "fair profits, fair interest and fair prices," the undesirability of socialism, of racial hatreds, and of revolution, governmental housing projects, group medicine, the protection of workers' health and safety, and the establishment of coöperative stores.

Of the church in general it may be said that there has been, since 1910 "a growing inclusiveness in the interpretation placed upon the social gospel. From an interpretation limited to the improvement of the condition of the industrial worker and to such prohibitory measures as Sabbath observance, the conception has been broadened to include international affairs, social justice, racial problems, the family, education, and almost every imaginable phase in the development of the individual and of society."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Federal Council Bulletin, Vol. XVI, No. 1, January, 1933, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Catholic Action*, Vol. XV, No. 1, January, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Recent Social Trends in the United States*, Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends (N. Y., McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1933), Vol. II, p. 1014.

At Oxford, England, in July, 1937 a world conference on the life and work of the church, attended by 414 delegates from most of the non-Roman Catholic churches of Christendom, representing 119 communions and 43 nations, devoted about two weeks to the study, in five commissions, of (1) Church and Community, (2) Church and State, (3) The Church and the Economic Order, (4) The Church and Education and (5) The Universal Church and the World of Nations, with special reference to Christianity and War. This conference, together with the Edinburgh conference on Faith and Order held in August of the same year, was perhaps chiefly significant as heralding a new sense of fellowship among the churches and a new willingness to disregard differences in the effort better to serve the one true God. Though considered by some observers as less indicative of the church's strength and courage than of its weakness and fear it is none the less true that both conferences were a response to an awakened sense of need and of responsibility. The Oxford conference in spite of the breadth of its treatment of Church, Community and State and of the widely divergent backgrounds of its delegates managed to put upon paper significant analyses of the theological, philosophical, economic and sociological factors in the five areas studied and certain formulations of shared judgment as to Christian responsibility in each area. These latter constitute what is in effect a series of resolutions, on the whole remarkable for their liberality and clarity. In themselves no more authoritative and binding than non-Catholic resolutions generally, they yet have caught the imaginations of many ordinarily indifferent to reform by resolution, but stirred by the broadly representative and picturesque character of the conference and by the truly first-rate thinking which produced them. The measure of their effectiveness must be the extent to which they become assimilated to the thought and feeling of the millions, lay and clerical, who were not privileged to attend. The recommendation both at Oxford and Edinburgh of a World Council of Churches as a permanent expression of the ecumenical spirit is perhaps the most significant outcome of these conferences.

Through every phase of the relationship between church and state runs the question of sovereignty, of the possession of ultimate authority. There is the theocracy, in which state is subordinate and

the state-church where, in the final analysis, the relation is reversed. And in America there is through separation of church and state a dual sovereignty. Let us in conclusion examine a little more in detail the implications of this arrangement for both the parties to it.

The church claims to be the source and authority for absolute standards of morals. It claims, in each of many of its branches, to be the sole way of salvation. It claims final authority over the individual's body, mind and spirit and over his social institutions.<sup>16</sup> Both in its Catholic and Protestant form its claim to final authority in determining moral issues (either as an institution or in the person of its individual members) is incompatible with social solidarity and organized control as functions of the state. The Catholic church can conceive of a situation in which the basic conflict between religion and government is reconciled through the Prince's ultimate subservience to the moral guidance of Mother Church. The Protestant theory of the supremacy of individual conscience if practiced with any sort of frequency becomes tantamount to theoretical anarchy and constitutes a denial of the right of the majority to coerce the individual (or the minority) to respect the public interest. All social action involves the subordination of the individual. Save in a voluntary society in which membership involves no pledge of loyalty and in which therefore no agreements or contracts can be entered into by that society which are dependent for their fulfillment upon the united effort of the entire group, there is required of the individual a surrender of individual desire and judgment to the majority's will—save for the provision of means whereby that will may be modified.

If it be claimed that conflict arises only when totalitarian church confronts totalitarian state and that the solution lies in granting to each its separate realm of authority, the answer must be that the necessities of the social situation demand of both institutions that they seek to affirm final authority within many of the same areas of thought and action. Loyalty to the state is itself a moral concept recognized as within the rightful realm of religion, unless religion be satisfied with an altogether other-worldly kingdom and with the

<sup>16</sup> *Vide, The Message and Decisions of Oxford on Church, Community and State* (N. Y., Universal Christian Council, 1937), p. 54.

notion of a man-God relationship which has no implications for human conduct.

In all history the practical and inevitably partial solution has lain in compromising one or another or both sets of loyalties to the exigencies of the immediate situation. Since men are at one and the same time members both of church and of state the conflict is in fact between two aspects of men's nature, two sometimes conflicting interests. In its basic form, especially in Protestantism, the conflict is the inevitable one between the individual and his social group or rather between personal and social desires which pull in different directions. And as in this basic situation, so in church-state relations there can be no theoretical justification for making exceptions to properly accredited social laws in behalf of individual conscience. The conscientious objector can demand no other alternative than the privilege of suffering for his convictions unless by injunction or the happy accident of delay in the actual confrontation of the issue he be given time in which to seek to change by due process the social law to which his conscience objects. Not infrequently his suffering at the hands of society serves as the most effective means of modifying the law to which he has objected. Both freedom of conscience and the social bond seem essential to man's normality. There are and have ever been times and occasions when they stand in complete opposition to one another. Such times and occasions will continue to arise until God's Kingdom of love shall fully come. And until then the conflict between a free church and a free state will remain at some points ineradicable.

## CHAPTER XVI

### The Verdict of History

**I**N OUR INVESTIGATION we have discovered that organized religion from earliest times has been the product and creature of its environment both natural and social. It arose as a means of dealing with strange forces in nature and in man, forces which were believed to be sentient and very exacting and vigilant. Certain acts must be regularly performed, others stringently avoided or the gods grew angry. As morality developed its codes, it called upon the gods to reinforce them. The old ways were the hallowed ways, for ghosts of the dead frowned upon innovation.

Thus it would seem that primitive religion was the product of its environment and the foe of change. Turning for a moment to glance at modern religion we recall from our analysis of the Protestant church that religion is a foe of change and very often its victim. This is particularly true in its outward and material aspects. But we have noted an inner consistency, a tenacity of purpose and function so strong as at times to seem perverse. As function after function was taken from it by organizations whose specialty each became, it refused to acknowledge defeat. It fought fire with fire, charity organization societies with enlightened church charities, public schools with church schools and colleges, social settlements with the institutional church,—reducing or eliminating the religious emphasis where it seemed to interfere with successful competition. The preacher, though his authority is questioned, his education equalled or surpassed, his news already out in the morning papers, continues to speak dogmatically, to enlighten the enlightened, to inform the well-informed. His public utterances are all monologues for he has not yet awakened to the fact that among intelligent folk the exchange of knowledge and opinion is at times desirable. The church has been badly mauled but its central activities remain unmodified. Modification has occurred chiefly in the

respect and interest with which the church is treated. The stubborn child has been stood in the corner. There it remains.

This presents but half the picture, and that half false without its counterpart. We must find answers to difficult questions if we are to see the church in its true and varied rôle. Is it right that primitive religion served altogether to reinforce the established order? Wherein does modern religion differ from the primitive in relation to ethics and morals? In what ways, if any, has modern religion operated to prevent changes in or to change the status quo? What in new opportunities and new methods does the future offer? It is to find convincing and effectual answers to this last question that the others and all our earlier questions have been asked. For we must see organized religion as in fact it was and is if we are to help it to become what in truth it may be.

In primitive times, we know, religion was a clumsy instrument dripping with blood. Yet it served the ends of civilization in conserving to each new generation the garnered wisdom of the past. It does not pay to forget that progress may be served in three ways; by discovering the new, by destroying the false and by preserving the true. In primitive times, even more than in our day, the false and the true were often sadly intermixed so that the true was discarded with the false, the false kept with the true, and the worth of the new went frequently unrecognized. But by and large the aegis of religion guarded for posterity those ways of thinking, feeling and behaving which hard experience had found so advantageous as to make them seem divine.

Of course in serving this function primitive religions stood squarely in the way of attempted alteration of all that was thus sanctioned. Three qualifications must be noted, however. There were many aspects of the primitive culture pattern which were not important enough to claim divine protection. These yielded more readily to innovation which, thus introduced, might work upward into the realm of sanction and taboo. Also in trance, dream or vision or by the accident, happy or unhappy, which followed some unusual action or event, change was introduced directly into the sanctioned ways through the instrumentality of religion itself. One illustration must suffice. "Among the Delawares, deprived of their lands and smarting with resentment against the whites for the



massacre of their tribesmen, one of the first Indian prophets appeared. This nameless prophet began preaching about 1762 and was associated with the Pontiac rebellion. He announced that he had been in the abode of the Great Spirit and had received a message forbidding war between the Indian tribes, the practice of polygamy, the use of alcoholic drinks, and the practice of magic, and also instructions in regard to the formation of a new ritualistic organization."<sup>1</sup> He achieved a very considerable following.

As in all societies, primitive and modern, change also occurred through the transfusion of cultures. Thus, we recall, the simple nomadic culture of the Israelites was modified by the more sophisticated culture of Canaan. And although the religious leaders of Israel struggled to keep uncontaminated the pure worship of Yahweh, there was inevitably an absorption of Canaanitish tree and pillar worship into the religion of the Israelites. So later into Greece and Rome strange gods were welcomed and worshipped.

We recognize that the religion of our own day evidences the same tendencies both to protect established ways and to permit or even to create change. The situation is, of course, far more complex. Within any community there are likely to exist a number of religious organizations and almost a like number of views as to the Divine Will in regard to any important ethical or moral issue such as prohibition, the National Child Labor Bill, divorce laws or birth control legislation. Furthermore, these varying interpretations of what is right and wrong in the sight of God often have a very clear economic bias. For like primitive man and often quite as naively, we project our moral standards upon Deity. Surely it is not strange that, on the vexed problems of capital and labor, the God of the wealthy speaks with a different voice than does the God of the poor. Catholicism in the United States has nobly championed the workers' cause. The vast majority of its members are workers. In Mexico and in Spain it has been so identified with the fortunes of the ruling classes that with them it has been crushed down by the revolt of the masses. Among our leading Protestant denominations, although rich and poor are mingled in them all, the Methodists and Baptists, once churches of the dis-

<sup>1</sup> Kirkpatrick, Clifford, *Religion in Human Affairs* (N. Y., John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1929), p. 195. Reprinted by permission.

inherited and in per capita wealth still somewhere down the scale, can rightly claim positions of leadership in the development of the movement for a Social Gospel of brotherhood in justice, equality and righteousness.<sup>2</sup> When it is remembered that in 1926 the total wealth of church and synagogue was conservatively estimated to be in excess of \$7,000,000,000, their expenditures in 1926 more than \$840,000,000, it is quite apparent that organized religion in the United States has a huge stake in our present economic order.

"... Will Protestantism now repeat the futile rôle of the Greek orthodox church in Russia by becoming, along with the other institutions of privilege, first the creator of revolution, then its repressor, and finally its victim?"<sup>3</sup>

Thus the complexity of society itself, the fact that religion speaks with a divided voice, and the tremendous stake of organized religion in the prevalent economic order constitute significant differences between modern and primitive religions in their influence upon social change. Further differences lie in the much accelerated rate of change and the greatly increased variety of forces operating upon society to change it. These we have elsewhere dealt with, placing special emphasis upon the truly terrifying influence of inventions, the social outcomes of which are rarely anticipated or adequately controlled. In simple primitive societies, innovation was rare and change a matter of centuries. Organized religion, at first a-moral, came to be a chief means of giving sanction to accepted ways, thus assuring their continuity down the generations. As, in developed civilizations, the rate of social change has tremendously accelerated, this quality of resistance to change, all but innate in religion, has become vastly more conspicuous. At the same time it has become more significant both for good and for ill.

In what specific ways has organized religion blocked social change within historic times? Notoriously it has opposed those conclusions of the natural sciences which seemed to contradict the revealed truths of sacred Scripture. Says Morris R. Cohen:—"It

<sup>2</sup> "Class-limited churches in both suburb and slum, in wealthy resident district and factory region, . . . follow the economic division of the population." Ward, Harry F., *Our Economic Morality* (N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 303.

<sup>3</sup> Ward, Harry F., *op. cit.*, pp. 316-7.

is not necessary for me to recount the fight of Christianity against the Copernican astronomy, against modern geology or biology, or against the scientific treatment of Biblical history. They have become commonplace. . . . The point to be noted is that the old adherents of religion did not want to know the truth, and that their religion did not encourage them to think it worth while to seek any other truth than their accepted particular faith. . . . The will to believe even contrary to demonstrative evidence, *credo quia absurdum*, is often lauded as a religious virtue.”<sup>4</sup>

Religion by assuming to find in Scripture a divine plan for human life and growth has stultified and weakened man's effort to use intelligent observation and reasoned logic in understanding his past and in planning his future.

“History . . . was reduced to a single theme. Its whole significance was compressed into one supreme event, transcendent, inexplicable, incomprehensible by human reason: namely, the redemption of mankind by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.”<sup>5</sup>

“It was not until well into the eighteenth century that the spirit of rational inquiry . . . made itself felt in the field of history. Then secular interests emerged from their long eclipse, and little by little politics, philosophy, economics, education, literature, and art escaped from the control of ecclesiastical authorities.”<sup>6</sup>

But to what extent has religion, in historic times and among civilized peoples, helped forward the processes of social change?

To the Protestant church, operating through its Anti-Saloon League, is attributed the passage of the prohibition amendment. This is probably correct and an outstanding illustration of church action producing social change. Yet it has become very clear that it was not the Protestant church but a small minority within it which “put over” that ill-fated measure. Now leaders are engaged upon the slow and painful task of trying to educate church members to an intelligent understanding of the issue that at some later date the ground now lost may be regained and held.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen, Morris R., in *Religion Today* (N. Y., Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1933), pp. 84-5, 87.

<sup>5</sup> Muzzey, David S., in *Religion Today*, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

The education of the masses of church people is slow, hard work. In the face of urgent need of immediate action on a dozen threatened fronts, the church's leaders stand miles behind the lines in pulpit, in forum and in classroom trying to explain why something should be done. Yet, beyond question in church schools and young people's societies, in church forums and pulpits on questions of race, of war, of labor relations, of civil liberties, and the like, social attitudes are being changed, some little readiness for social action created. Hesitant, fragmentary, inadequate as it is, it none the less constitutes a specific contribution of Protestantism to social change. Of the possibility of the organized extension of such activities we speak in a later chapter.

The action of the Protestant church in politics, including its support of prohibition, is not in all respects a pleasant picture. Politics like war is not founded on the Christian ethic. In the campaign to keep Governor Smith from the White House this fact was quite apparent. Yet certain Protestant leaders both lay and clerical, Bishop Cannon among them, did not hesitate to fight fire with fire. The story of that campaign is told with candor by Michael Williams in *The Shadow of the Pope*. It is well documented though it shows but half the picture. The Protestant church as such did not endorse the scandalous lies, the vile subterfuges of that campaign. But the Protestant church was used and in the South particularly, lent itself to that use in the persons of large numbers of its members.

The church has spoken on concrete and specific political issues, if not officially at least through certain of its leaders. But both in its vicious and in its constructive phases this proves the exception rather than the rule. Reference has been made to the relative ineffectiveness of vague and generalized pronouncements upon which the Protestant church bases its chief claim to social liberalism.<sup>7</sup> However we must not ignore the possibility that even the preaching and teaching of abstract truths make appreciable difference. Even the "impossible ideals" of the Sermon on the Mount, though they be judged impractical, may yet have their effect in making easier the gradual modification of social patterns in the direction of those ideals. Really to love one's enemies is judged to be beyond

<sup>7</sup> *Vide*, pp. 114-115.

the capacities of most men, but it is altogether likely that that age-old ideal has exerted and is continuing to exert its influence upon movements for the outlawry of war and the more humane treatment of criminals, the enemies of society.

Likewise there is the oft-asserted belief that organized religion serves to strengthen in the individual those desires and tendencies, those habits of thought and action which better accord with his conception of God's Will, and that conversely it serves somewhat as a deterrent to all that he believes ungodly. From this angle, organized religion is the means through which the individual conscience is kept alert, the sense of sin and the desire for salvation stimulated. Were the churches to close would crime increase? Nobody knows. Certainly religion has been instrumental in turning many individuals from crime through conversion. Also it has been the ostensible cause of many a revulsion from "goodness". On the whole it has stood for a sexual morality greatly above the level of prevailing practice. "Absolute suppression [of prostitution] has proved possible only in predominantly agricultural communities where the drive against prostitution is aided by gossip and a powerful religious morality."<sup>8</sup> Probably its total effect upon a community's life is in the direction of the common decencies and beyond them toward the "impossible ideals" it preaches.

Likewise, in its prophets and its sects it has, as among primitive folk, made specific contribution to social change. No major prophet can long remain in the church. For the major prophet fundamentally challenges the social order of which the church is an integral part. But at the same time he is invariably the product of the best in the tradition and belief of the church that drives him out. His message is new not in its different parts but in their emphasis and order. The social dynamic exerted by an Isaiah or a Jeremiah, by a Buddha or a Jesus or a Mohammed is too powerful and pervasive to be definitely measured. Yet, in a literal sense, each one of them came out of an organized religion. In similar fashion most of the new religions, often no more than sects, are the product of, as well as the protest against, institutionalized religion.

<sup>8</sup> Glassford, Pelham D., "Prostitution Legalized," *American Mercury*, August, 1937, p. 455.

Christians, Protestants and Separatists, Anabaptists and Wesleyans, Quakers and Mennonites were in the days of their naive and ardent youth, the harbingers of change.

Inherent in every determined effort to give visible expression to some variant religious and social insight, is that sense of divine reinforcement which gives to human effort a tremendous drive and energy. True, it inaugurates a pogrom as readily as it founds a hospital. Yet it does provide a plusage of power which overrides convention, holding in fine disdain the regulative and restrictive powers of the social majority. To be convinced that the stars in their courses are fighting against Sisera, is to be mightily strengthened in subduing him. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Through its educators, its politicians and its moralists, through its prophets and its sects, through its preaching of "impossible ideals," through its glorification of a just and righteous and forgiving God and its assurance of a more than human strength to those who serve Him, the church contributes to social change. To those who believe the church of Christ to be an instrument of the Divine Will, that change in spite of the church's sins and errors is in the main in the direction of the world's redemption.

What, then, is the verdict of history? True as it is that organized religion has been the source and inspiration of social change, it yet must be conceded that down the centuries its influence has been overwhelmingly on the side of conservation. Much that it has struggled to preserve and much that it has sought to introduce have doubtless been unfortunate, opposed to the common good. But, as a social institution, religion has functioned both as the sponsor of much needed change and as the staunch defender of the old and the tried. In the light of history, innovation is but its minor rôle. History makes clear that organized religion has consistently and with power played the part of conservator of attested social values.

If the church is to serve effectively the present and the future, it must not be satisfied merely to emulate the past. New and challenging opportunities confront it both as conservator and as reformer. It must push forward to take its stand upon these new frontiers.



## PART IV

### New Frontiers of Religion





## CHAPTER XVII

### Worship and the Reality of God

“MEN SEE NO necessary relation between the moral struggles of society and the Gospel of Christ. The Church is not wholly to blame for this situation, since many spheres of the common life in which it once took the leading part have now been taken over by the community or by the State. But these changes only challenge the Church to seek new areas and new means for the redemption of the common life.”<sup>1</sup>

It is the task of these concluding chapters to point the way to certain of these areas and to suggest the means whereby they may be seized and held in Christ's name.

If we are to discover any better strategy for religion in our day we must find it in the very alterations which have weakened it or in others which perhaps have thus far passed it by. We must ask: What new opportunities confront the church in a changed society and in newly forged instruments and methods of change? We must seek a strategy based upon awareness of these things. Surely we can find some answer to the queries: What should it mean to the church that the educational level of its membership is steadily rising? What opportunities for the church are hidden in the new leisure of the masses? And a fumbling grasp of the proper shape and function of the church to come may be had by discovering how the church may take and use new knowledge of the inner nature of man, new inventions which extend man's power, new methods of informing and releasing his mind and will. For these all are present realities so full of promise as to rouse the church to vitalizing effort, if it but understood. And until the leaders of the church heed the challenge of their presence and grasp its meaning and study to know the uses to which their presence may

<sup>1</sup> *The Message and Decisions of Oxford on Church, Community and State* (N. Y., Universal Christian Council, 1937), p. 12.

be put, the church must remain a giant bound in chains of tradition and complacency.

But the secret of the church's liberation lies in the past as well as in the present and future. We remember that religion originated as man's response to strange and mysterious powers in nature and in man, powers early explained as the attributes of ghosts or spirits. We know that always religion has primarily concerned itself with man's relation to those powers in an effort to coerce them or to placate them in the interests of the worshipper or in an effort through reverent appreciation to commune with them and to "enjoy" them. The objective reality of Spirit is a thesis fundamental to the existence of religion. The institution of religion in Protestantism has two basic functions, that of worship including the effort to discover God's Will for the individual and society, and that of striving to conform life to the pattern of the Divine Will. In the chaos of modern life, the defeat of man's dreams of a Kingdom of Love soon to come, a defeat embittered by a new awareness of the unbrotherliness of man, it seems quixotic to talk of conforming even an individual or a family, let alone a world, to the pattern of the Divine Will. Everywhere gigantic forces are operative. Science and invention, blind to every other goal than that of power; nationalism; moral and ethical disillusionment and uncertainty; the active resentment of underprivileged classes, nations and races presaging revolution and the threat of a greater world war,—these are chief among the conflicting currents which make life a turmoil and undermine its traditional institutions including the church.

Against such odds struggle seems futile. In 1894 William Graham Sumner wrote:—"Everyone of us is a child of his age and cannot get out of it. . . . The things which will change it are the great discoveries and inventions, the new reactions inside the social organism, and the changes in the earth itself on account of changes in the cosmical forces. . . . The men will be carried along with it and be made by it. The utmost they can do by their cleverness will be to note and record their course as they are carried along, which is what we do now, and is that which leads us to the vain fancy that we can make or guide the movement. That is why it is the greatest folly of which a man can be capable,

to sit down with a slate and pencil to plan out a new social world.”<sup>2</sup> But every age has had its pessimists. They have served a purpose in destroying blind optimism and in compelling a realistic facing of facts. To admit the futility of effort is to surrender our manhood, and to deny our Sonship to the living God. Says Dr. Fosdick: “If one hopes for any victorious outcome for religion in the face of this complex situation, it must be because one takes a long look and is not too much obsessed by immediacies; because one has learned from history that out of the most disturbed eras, as out of travail, have come some of the great spiritual births; because one perceives in religion eternal factors indissolubly matched with deep and abiding human needs and not confined within any historic expressions.”<sup>3</sup>

If ever there was a period in our history when man needed to renew his faith in God it is now. There can be no greater disservice to the cause of religion than the effort to reduce it to humanistic terms. Man’s humanity to man defines but one aspect of religion and that a minor one. Man’s inadequacy to meet man’s need is more obvious than ever. Surely the churches, shaken out of their complacency, will turn more earnestly to that which has always been their major task, to aid mankind in their search after God.

Here is the basis of every modern movement away from merely human striving after social reform. Here is the sort of crisis man feels impotent to meet if he be unaccompanied by the Divine Spirit. The leaders of our churches must devote more of their energies to the cultivation of the presence of God. When they have done this they will perhaps be able to preach God with a new earnestness of conviction which will make Him once more the central fact of life for the multitudes whose belief has faded to the pattern of a polite tradition to which church attendance is a form of homage.

The analogy to the response of primitive man to forces beyond his comprehension and control is of course obvious. Religion is

<sup>2</sup> *War and Other Essays* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1919), pp. 209-210.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Church and State* (Headline Book No. 10 of the Foreign Policy Assn., 1937), p. 46.

a phenomenon of crisis. But there exists a fundamental difference. Although the naive observer sees in these vast social forces a God who works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform and seeks to gain control merely by humbling himself before God, the enlightened believer takes a very different attitude. He recognizes the extent to which the social chaos he confronts is the inevitable outcome of man's own clumsy mismanagement, the forces released Frankenstein monsters of his own creation. Further he believes that he knows in a general way what needs to be done, the social laws which must be embodied in the social structure. His faith in the God revealed by Jesus is strengthened by the realization that these social laws are identical with the rigid demands of that effective brotherhood announced in Jesus' words and life. To the means of their application to a society diseased with the poisons of selfish nationalism and mutual distrust he would devote the powers of his mind, the resources of scientific knowledge which mankind has painfully acquired. He would not run away from the grim realities of the present scene into the sheltering love of God. He would turn to God to find the courage and the patience to face and master them.

The Catholic church, the Church of England and to a considerable extent the Episcopal and Lutheran churches give less prominence to the sermon than do the Protestant churches of the disestablishment. There is reason for this in the fact that these latter denominations came into being as the expression of social protest of disfranchised groups and in the sermon they found opportunity to make that protest vocal. Though they have now ceased to be protest groups and have become churches accepted by and accepting the social order which supports them, they continue of a Sunday to put more emphasis upon instruction than upon worship. Since that is so, it is more important that the attendance be large than that the ritual or worship be duly performed to the glory of God. In contrast in the other churches the priest and the rector and those worshippers who may be present center their attention upon those acts of ritual whereby God is glorified.

To the average Protestant church, folk go to hear the sermon. To the Catholic church they go to worship God. And in the Protestant service all that precedes the sermon is but preliminary to it,

designed not to the glorification of God but to the preparation of the minds of the congregation for the message that is to follow. Father Divine, the Negro whose many followers believe he is God incarnate, insists that those who would understand him and by him be saved must "relax the conscious intelligence." There is both humor and wisdom in the phrase. Perhaps it a little burlesques the doctrine of those who deny the power of human intellect to share in the divine process of the world's salvation, and of those First Century Christians, the Oxford Group, who each morning wait upon the Lord for personal guidance in even the most trivial of their daily tasks. However that may be, the phrase quite aptly describes the real function of the so-called congregational worship that precedes the Protestant sermon. Intentionally or otherwise it serves primarily to "relax the conscious intelligence" by putting the congregation in a receptive mood. For a devotional address this might prove quite fitting. For the dogmatic presentation of ministerial opinion upon some current controversial issue it is no more than a clever device whereby the speaker, already exempt from interruption, is given a further unfair advantage.

If the Protestant churches are to prove equal to their central task they must cease thus to confuse the worship of God with social propaganda however apt and timely it may seem to be. Only the sermon which lifts the mind and heart toward God deserves a worshipful setting.

This uncovers a serious inconsistency of Protestant practice. Were the minister endowed to speak with final authority as to God's will for man, the present structure of the church service would be on that ground defensible. But he has long since been robbed of that endowment. He speaks as a man set apart, at the expense of his congregation, to a life of prayer and study. He is, or should be, a specialist in his field, a man of God, as, in greater or lesser degree, all men are, and a scholar. But a Protestantism which believes in the priesthood of all believers and in the spiritual authority of the individual conscience can have no place for ex *cathedra* utterance.

Even if the Protestant minister could find theological defense for authoritarian dogmatism, the temper of the times would prove

his downfall. Unless drugged by tradition and the relaxing influence of stained glass, Gothic arch, prayer, dim light and soft music, the Protestant in the pew is not ready to surrender either conscience or intellect to another, though he wear the robes of his office and speak in thunderous tones.

It would seem both fair and reasonable therefore to reserve for occasions in which monologue might give place to free discussion the consideration of controversial issues of any sort whatever. At all events Protestant preachers and especially those given to dogmatism should more frequently follow the example of John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church in New York who though he be at times quite dogmatic, yet has in years past made it a practice, immediately after the service, to come down from his pulpit to meet the questions and disagreements of that large part of his congregation who accepted his invitation to remain that they and he might "reason together."

Yet this does not solve the problem of worship. We are not here called upon to consider the merits and drawbacks of the discussion method in the sharing of religious and social insights and interests. It is now our deep concern to stress the need for regular and well conducted services of devotion in place of a proportion at least of the well staged oratorical displays now called "morning and evening worship."

Surely our study of religions has confirmed in us the conviction that the reality of Spirit is the keystone of the arch man has erected in the effort to give tangible expression to his response to the majesty and mystery which surround him. Remove that keystone and the structure falls in ruin as meaningless and futile as is any other effort to embody a false dream.

The trained Protestant minister, product of one of our leading seminaries, is variously skilled. But how rarely is he master of the literature, the music, the art, the drama of devotion, in which saint and mystic have sought to capture the joy that was in Jesus, the peace that the world can neither give nor take away. And how completely are his energies absorbed in tending ecclesiastical machinery. With no time for private devotions and a steadily diminishing taste for them, he loses God in the hurry to serve Him. If the Protestant church is to meet the task of these times, it must seek leaders who

have found for themselves the riches of the coined thought and emotion of the world's great seers and lovers of God. It must seek leaders who through practice have learned and can teach the art of communion, leaders who because they have been with God bear witness that God is.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### Religion and Leisure

WHERE MAN'S ENERGIES are fully used in the struggle to secure the bare necessities of life, civilization and culture must remain rudimentary. It was in the more fertile regions of the earth when food was relatively plentiful and where the weather was kind, as in the valley of the Nile, that high civilizations first flourished. For leisure gives the imagination scope, makes room for the growth of life's amenities. A hand-to-mouth existence, driven by hunger and fear, rises but little above the level of the brute. Though at the other extreme life may be drugged with ease, made lethargic by plenty and the heat of the sun.

Yet until scientific invention coupled with scientific management and the development of large-scale production were brought into use in the latter years of our era, the struggle for life's necessities demanded the hard labor of all but a privileged few. Babylonia and Assyria, Egypt, Greece and Rome developed their civilizations upon the foundations of slavery and a toiling peasantry. Feudal Europe followed a basically similar pattern. Nor did the industrial revolution at once change the complexion of society. The number of the leisured and the privileged grew, but the wage-slave supplanted the serf and the fourteen hour working day was not unusual. Only in the years since the Great War has production, stimulated by the demands of war and served by mechanical invention, reached the point where there looms into view an economy of plenty to supplant the economy of want. In terms of the world's needs we are still far from the goal of an adequate production. Were wealth and purchasing power more equitably distributed, the products of farm and factory would be fully absorbed and still there would be needs unsatisfied. None the less, for the first time in history the daily hours of toil of the average

citizen have been so reduced that he, too, has been granted a significant amount of leisure. The eight hour day is very general, the five day week is becoming so, and the five hour day and the five day week are not beyond the realm of probability as year by year machinery is made to produce more goods with less expenditure of energy and of intellect. Nothing is more portentous for the nation's future than the use that the average citizen is making and will make of this new opportunity.

"Leisure is not only the germinating time of art and philosophy, the time in which the seer attains glimpses of the values and the realities behind ordinary appearance; it is also the opportunity for appreciation, the time in which such values get across into common experience."<sup>1</sup>

More accurately defined, leisure is neither a period of time nor any particular kind of activity, mental or physical. It is the condition of personal freedom from activities necessary to maintenance, the condition of being uncoerced by the mere routines of daily living, the condition of following inner rather than outer compulsions, primarily for the enjoyment or pleasure that lies in the act rather than for any "useful" outcome.

Organized religion has always been intimately associated with leisure and its uses. Though we cannot agree with Lester F. Ward's<sup>2</sup> generalization that priests were the first leisured class, preferring to grant that distinction to the warriors, yet we are sure that a leisured priesthood was an essential condition to the development of religion. The priests were set apart to the intermittent performance of certain functions. In the periods between they were left to their own awesome devices. In dream and silent meditation, imagination was given scope. Thus myth and ritual, the rhythm and music of the dance, the magic of incantation were woven into the pattern of religion. Thus in periods free from ordinary toil, symbols of divinity were lovingly shaped and colored. So through the leisure of the priests drama and story-telling, the graphic arts and philosophy had their beginnings and their growth.

<sup>1</sup> Craven, Ida, Article on "Leisure" in *The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1933), Vol. 9, p. 405.

<sup>2</sup> *Dynamic Sociology* (N. Y., D. Appleton & Co., 1915), p. 242.

Games are in essence but survivals of religious rites robbed of their taboos. The sphere of the sun and moon, dread object once, has become a ball to be tossed in play. Bones cast before the altar that their position in falling might reveal the future, find modern counterpart in dice and cards. The dance, a solemn ritual act and music, a magic that pleased and summoned dread spirits, created in awe during periods of priestly leisure, have become the gay pursuits which consume the leisure of the masses. Beyond doubt the warriors, too, made their contribution. Supported by their tribes as specialists in defense and offense they found time to re-enact the stories of former conquests, to decorate their new-made weapons and with the priests to devise the ritual of war. Warrior and priest we have found to be still in partnership. And from the viewpoint of the working-man both still have much to do with leisure.

The United States has not, in the European sense, a leisured class. It is too young a nation and its citizens have been too much occupied in exploring and exploiting a continent. Yet it has its problems of leisure, problems related both to the privileged classes and to the average citizen. The conspicuous and wasteful flaunting of wealth by the relatively few has served to sharpen the resentment of the many who live always close to poverty. The working folk, now that they have leisure, find at hand an increasing variety of ways of using it. Perhaps, if they could afford it, they would ape the rich in extravagance. But the life of leisured wealth, with its estates, its yachts, its country clubs, its foreign travel, its costly fêtes and parties is closed to them. Leisure as a commodity possessed by the masses is by them variously invested. For the investment of leisure is dependent upon the existing interests and appreciations of those who possess it, upon their financial resources, upon the organizations and instruments of leisure available in the community and upon the customs, traditions and controls society has built around them. Vast agencies, public and private, have already been developed to aid ordinary folk in the investment of their free time. Not least among these agencies is the organized church. Since in modern times religion and morals have become almost synonymous and since the use men make of

their leisure is largely formative of character, the church has set itself up as an extra-legal arbiter and guide in its use.

The Puritan tradition is not friendly to leisure. The congregational and separatist movements arose among working folk, not among the leisured classes of England and Europe. It is not an accident that the Church of England and the Episcopal Church in America are somewhat less exacting in regard to dancing, card-playing and the theater—prerogatives of the leisured classes. Calvinism exalted piety, industry, economy and sobriety as indications of election to the company of the saved. And in this country from colonial times to the present, the pulpit has condemned idleness and thundered against the gayer diversions. In a measure, of course, the church is right. Leisure time too often brings moral relaxation in its spending. To raise the moral level of a nation's leisure is to raise the level of character of its people. Not by a man's deeds while he is under the compulsion of earning a living, but by what he does when he is free to do as he pleases is his moral worth revealed. "Through the influence they [commercialized recreational agencies] exert on attitudes and behavior they help to color the dominant culture patterns of the community. The standards of taste and of behavior, as well as the intellectual and artistic interests, are determined to no small degree by the forms of commercialized recreation."<sup>3</sup> A religion that would shape morals must seek to control the uses to which leisure is put.

But in this field the church has many competitors, some interested in character and morals, others only in financial returns. Leisure is a social resource. "The individualism that has typified the aggrandizement of our natural resources, the absence of a planned economy in our industries, the free competition that always characterizes the pioneering stage in the conquest of rich territory, has been displayed as well in . . . uncoordinated efforts to utilize the resource of leisure. But while this selfish and wasteful scramble for gain has reached the point from which we now envisage the rapid depletion of our stores of wood and coal, of oil and minerals and water-power, the supply of leisure has steadily

<sup>3</sup> Gist, Noel P., and Halbert, L. A., *Urban Society* (N. Y., Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1933), p. 536.

increased with the growth in population and the shortening of the working day. . . . There is more leisure to be utilized than there has ever been before.”<sup>4</sup>

The agencies which exist by virtue of the exploitation of leisure fall into four great groups, those run by government and supported by taxation, those carried on for others by religious and philanthropic agencies, those conducted by private groups for private ends and self-supporting, and those conducted by commercial agencies for profit. A moment's thought must indicate the immense number and the vast resources of these agencies based upon leisure and its uses. Excluding compulsory education as hardly a matter of leisure, there yet remains to government its whole range of public parks, national, state and local, its athletic fields, playgrounds and bathing beaches, its rapidly expanding programs of informal adult education in classes of every variety, in forums and discussion groups, in organized recreation and athletics and in the schools themselves the growing tendency to extend their function beyond curriculum to a wide variety of free and noncompulsory extra-curricular activities which increase by many hours each week the time the child spends at school.

The Works Progress Administration signalizes a remarkable increase in governmental participation in the exploitation of the leisure time of its citizens. Colonel Somervell, as Administrator of the W.P.A. in New York City, reported under date of July 27, 1937, an expenditure since August 1, 1935, of over \$112,000,000 for the development of the park system. “In 1933 there were 164 park playgrounds in New York City; to-day 313 are in active operation . . . Instead of two public swimming pools there are twelve to-day. . . . Last summer they were used by 1,785,058 persons, of whom 604,405 were children.” He reported an expenditure of nearly \$45,000,000 on projects sponsored by the Board of Education, projects in which over 500,000 adults and about 250,000 children participated.<sup>5</sup>

It is hard to realize that this huge expenditure in money and personal services in the interests of the leisure time activities of

<sup>4</sup> Swift, A. L., Jr., “The School and Children's Leisure” in *Religious Education*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, February 1932, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide*, New York Times, August 16, 1937, p. 8.

the population of a single city is in addition to the vast activities carried on by a multitude of other agencies public and private, philanthropic, religious and commercial. For example, in 1929 there were eighty settlements in New York City, whose current expenditures in that year totaled \$2,763,892.<sup>6</sup> They employed over 500 full time workers, almost 1,000 part-time workers, "and utilized the services of approximately 1,500 volunteers."<sup>7</sup> Eighteen of the eighty settlements had a total membership of about 15,000 persons. There were listed 1,696 organized social clubs.<sup>8</sup> The activities of the settlements, in addition to clubs, included personal service, visual arts, games rooms and social rooms, athletics and sports, parties, libraries and study rooms, health work, music, social dances, kindergartens, nurseries, and nursery schools, homemaking, dramatics, festivals and pageants, story telling, dancing classes, religious and Hebrew classes (in 36 settlements), lectures and forums, playgrounds, motion pictures, camps and vacation houses, English and citizenship classes, outings and trips, publications, child training, lunch rooms, nature-study, commercial activities and political and social science classes.<sup>9</sup>

As further illustration, there are in Greater New York about 35 Y.M.C.A. buildings, enrolling about 45,000 members, carrying on a wide range of activities and expending annually an amount in the neighborhood of \$4,000,000. Add to these figures those of the Y.W.C.A.s, of the Jewish Community Centers, of the Boy and Girl Scouts and similar organizations, of the uncounted private social and athletic clubs, lodges, and benefit societies, of the political clubs, of the Vereins, Sons of Italy and other similar social organizations among nationality groups, and you begin to get a picture of the immense urban development of social institutions primarily concerned with the average citizen's use of leisure time.

But this whole mass of organization is more than equalled by the institutions grouped under the head of commercialized recrea-

<sup>6</sup> Kennedy, Albert J., and Farra, Kathryn, *Social Settlements in New York City* (N. Y., Columbia University Press, 1935), p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

tion. New York City as an amusement center of the world is so unique as to constitute a poor example of American cities. Accurate statistics for the nation as a whole are not available. "It is estimated that in 1931 there were 22,731 moving picture theatres in the country with a total seating capacity of 11,300,000 and a daily attendance of 15,000,000." <sup>10</sup> A study made in Chicago in 1925 estimated, for the moving picture theatres of that city, that "the annual attendance would aggregate 118,675,000, or an average of almost 40 times a year for every man, woman, and child in the city." <sup>11</sup>

"Of other types of commercialized recreation the story is the same. Millions swarm to the twentieth century gladiatorial contests that are staged on football gridirons of the country. . . . The Buffalo Survey of 1925 estimated that approximately one-tenth of the population of the city could be accommodated in the commercial amusement places, including the theaters, the dance halls, the pool halls, and the bowling alleys. Assuming that this city is typical of other urban centers, there are enough commercialized agencies of recreation in the cities of the country to keep from 10 to 12 million people amused at any time of the day." <sup>12</sup>

In an earlier chapter we made reference to the Herculean efforts of the city churches to compete with these many agencies for the leisure of their constituencies. It is no wonder that they have been so largely futile. For the majority are not equipped for effective competition. They lack the flair for showmanship, perhaps. Certainly most of them lack well trained recreational leaders. But they have tried—sometimes with loss of dignity. A Brooklyn church, once nationally known and honored, has used the scheme of a Sunday evening, of showing a motion picture which is interrupted in the middle to accommodate a brief sermon on a text the minister plucks somehow from the film. Institutional churches are using the same device to secure Sunday school attendance. Numerous Catholic churches have recently displayed large signs advertising on a given night each week, "Play Bingo—Win a cash

<sup>10</sup> Gist and Halbert, *op. cit.*, p. 526.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

prize"—a gambling game borrowed from the moving picture theatre where it is used to boost attendance.

The church is a leisure-time organization, seeking to prevent its competitors from trespassing on the day by ancient tradition set aside for worship, and struggling also to pre-empt some small share of week-time leisure for its uses. In both efforts it has largely failed. What is it to do?

It cannot afford to surrender. It cannot escape its responsibility both to attack those aspects of leisure which cheapen and degrade and to point the way to more wholesome and rewarding behavior. A religion which ignores the problems the new leisure has created, cuts itself off from a large area of life. Tenacious of traditional morality, the church in every generation is to be found defending the old against the new. A decade or two behind the prevailing mores, it has adapted too much of that which a generation before was new and has sanctioned it. Dr. Marvin R. Vincent, writing in 1867, has this to say of the waltz and two-step, "round dances" now replaced in dance hall and church house by the "rhumba" and the "big apple."

"One cannot much wonder at the disgust excited by those importations from Paris brothels, the round dances, which, with the present style of female attire, really leave modest men at some loss what to do with their eyes. Let us have as much thundering at these as you will. Let us not mince words. Let ridicule, and sarcasm, and denunciation exhaust their armories, for these are abuses; positive evils."<sup>13</sup>

Slowly we are emerging from the taboo whereby the human body was pronounced indecent and unclean. The rather more than semi-nudity of our bathing beaches, the informality of shorts and beach pyjamas are less noticed and remarked upon. From some pulpits denunciations still are heard. But they have grown infrequent. Prudery stands condemned by common sense.

It is true that much of the church's effort to control man's use of leisure has been in the form of negative commands. Yet it has not always been wrong in its judgments. The prohibition of alcohol

<sup>13</sup> *Amusement, A Force in Christian Training* (Troy, N. Y., Wm. H. Young, 1867), p. 23.



will one day be accepted by a large majority as intelligent and right. It is a social poison and does society vastly more harm than good. When this incontrovertible truth is fully and clearly understood, alcohol will go. In matters of this sort the church's task is primarily one of honest education. Lewd performances on stage and screen degrade sex and the true love founded in part upon it. This sort of thing society should not allow. Again, the facts are fairly obvious. The recent survey of motion pictures under the auspices of the Payne Fund state these facts dispassionately and clearly. The church should see that they are widely known. The effective control of leisure, like that of any other social situation, will require a certain amount of fervid emotional appeal to fix public attention upon it. But to the extent to which control is gained, it will come not through compulsion but through knowledge scientifically secured and applied. If organized religion is to be an effective agent in the restraint of those leisure time behaviors which degrade society it must depend less upon denunciation, more upon objective mastery of facts and the means of using them to constructive ends. The techniques of community study are among the social instruments ready to the church's use. We deal with them in a later chapter.

But the whole task of the church in relation to leisure is not completed with these efforts to regulate and to restrain. Since leisure, crime and youth are a trinity well known to the police and to the courts and since the religious education of youth is the church's acknowledged function, it cannot well ignore the challenge to champion the rights of youth to clean, safe and creative play. Because modern educators are convinced that only that is truly learned which is learned in relation to its use, the church has no alternative since it is denied entrance to the schools, but to demand from school and home and secular agency a sufficient amount of children's leisure to afford it the opportunity to make religious education something more than religious instruction of a Sunday morning. Religion is a way of life or it is socially insignificant. If it is to be taught as a way of life it must be taught in its relation to life situations. Christian youth should know the history of their religion and its sacred writings. But this is not

enough. They should learn the meaning of Christianity for life as they live it with others. The Sunday school in which the classes are organized as clubs that meet during the week for fellowship in shared activities and interests under the friendly guidance of a teacher-leader, has a chance, at least, to make religion meaningful for life. At its best the club is society in miniature, the adult leader a Christian skilled in helping youth to learn by experience of shared effort the meaning and use of brotherhood, the tested worth of Christian ideals and standards. Of an even nominally Christian community the church has the right and the duty to demand this minimum of its children's leisure. Of its members it has the right and duty to demand the resources in equipment and in leadership to enable it to offer youth a program of joyous and enriching activity in which youth will wish to share. A trained ministry, an enlightened constituency with a new sense of the basic importance of this task such that paid and volunteer workers may be willing and eager to give the task the thought and effort and time that it deserves, and a community sufficiently alert to understand and to coöperate—these are the prerequisites to success. The church is foolish which seeks to compete with secular organizations on a secular plane. It wastes effort and brings confusion if it so far forgets its basic purpose as to offer to youth of other faiths activities which purport to be wholly secular. Its first and urgent task both as a community agency and as an exemplar of its faith is the religious education of its own constituency.

And, surely, it need not restrict that service to youth alone. The church is, in its community, an agency of adult education in the wise and enriching use of leisure. As need arises, let it more frequently and more resourcefully provide for Christian men and women the opportunity to explore the meaning of their faith, to test its efficacy in solving some at least of the many common problems of life which they confront. Here is the opportunity in Christian fellowship to share perplexity and doubt, confidence and faith through honest and frank discussion, to find new meaning and joy in life through drama and music, art and literature, through games and social recreation. Numerous as they are, other

non-religious agencies have not begun to meet the needs of the average citizen for leadership and opportunity to learn to use their new gift of leisure for the enrichment of life. The religion of Jesus is not negation. It is affirmation of joy in living. It seeks not the repression of desire but its expression in activity that releases individual resources to the service of society.

## CHAPTER XIX

### The Church and Group Education for Child and Adult

IN OUR DISCUSSION of worship the more authoritarian churches have been lauded. As we discuss the church and group education we find the more democratic churches in the favored position, for group work, as it has come to be called, is at its best a process of social self-realization through shared experience in coöperative effort to satisfy mutual interests.

Group work is one of the three major fields of social work, the others being case work and community organization. Its recent development has taken place chiefly outside the churches, in certain of the character-building, leisure-time agencies mentioned in the preceding chapter, notably in the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A.s, the Jewish Community Centers and the settlements. It is of three types, the small self-governing club, with a variety of interests and with membership usually by invitation, the large group for mass activity without regular membership, and the "hobby" or special interest group whose primary concern is with some particular activity such as music or drama or weaving, and whose membership is usually open to any who wish to join. All are important and have their place but the first named, the self-governing clubs, are the most significant and for several reasons.

As primary, face-to-face groups, their members united by vitally shared and varied interests, they give opportunity for socializing experience very much as do the family and clan. Sociological study of gangs<sup>1</sup> in our cities has proven the tremendous influence for good or ill which the gang has upon the personality and character of its members. In the early days of the social settlements, so unsavory were gang reputations that it was the established policy

<sup>1</sup> Cf., Thrasher, Frederic M., *The Gang* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1927) and Puffer, J. Adams, *The Boy and His Gang* (Boston; N. Y.; Chicago, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1912).

to "break up the gangs," scattering members among a number of settlement clubs. That policy has since been reversed, for it was discovered that gang loyalty was potentially valuable, capable of direction to social ends. Likewise, the gang become a club was far more likely to carry the more ethical standards of behavior acquired in the settlement out into the street than was the individual boy who returned to a gang whose ethics were unmodified by settlement influence. With the possible exception of the family, the play group is the most formative influence in the development of a child's character. It affords him the essential opportunity to learn how to get on with his fellows and it more or less inevitably shapes him to its own accepted patterns. The favorable or unfavorable judgment of his chosen comrades means more to the average child than any other opinion whatsoever.

Nor is the influence of the small fraternal group limited to the periods of childhood and youth. The average adult belongs to many groups<sup>2</sup> and in each his characteristic behaviors and attitudes shift in conscious and unconscious accommodation to that particular group. In more than theory we are each a composite, not always consistent, of the standards and behaviors of the groups with which we are identified. Because he is the product of it, "a man is known by the company he keeps." It is also true that the social effectiveness of any one of us, our total impact upon our day and generation, is in large degree dependent upon how well we have mastered the art of making our individual thought and will effective in the corporate activities in which we share. Man is a social animal but he must rise well above the animal level if his influence is to prove in any sense outstanding.

As already hinted, the democratic rather than the authoritarian form of organization is congenial to the development of group work. To-day our democratic form of government is struggling against odds to justify itself. Over large portions of the globe the masses, baffled and lost in the post-war chaos, have surrendered intellect and will to dictators who in return for strictest obedience promise a degree of security. There is more than a slight indication

<sup>2</sup> *Vide*, Ferguson, Charles W., *Fifty Million Brothers, A Panorama of Lodges and Clubs* (N. Y., Farrar and Rinehart, 1937).

that our vaunted democracy is drifting toward an American brand of fascism. It *could* happen here and for this reason,—the masses of our people, a heterogeneous mixture of races and nations, have not yet learned to make democracy effective through intelligent coöperation in its processes. Party loyalty is inherited in the main and party politicians choose the candidates and fabricate the platforms on which they stand. The masses in America have not learned the art of intelligent coöperation to gain mutually desired ends. There is but one solution, one effective barrier to the rising tide of dictatorship, education in the methods of true democracy. Group work, in the form of leisure-time activities among youth and adults is spreading like wild-fire over the nation, penetrating even into rural communities through the 4-H clubs, the Scouts, the Y., and similar organizations. Informal adult education has assumed phenomenal proportions. In all this the churches have their own small share. But the growth has been too rapid to be sound or safe. Case work has its standards and its professional requirements. Group work lacks both. It has become a fad rather than a soundly based method of education. The great majority of its professional leaders are inadequately trained. And they are outnumbered by volunteer leaders who have virtually no training at all. In 1936 the National Association for the Study of Group Work was organized in an effort to establish aims and objectives, methods and standards.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the nation the best trained leaders are rallying to meet the challenge which the total situation presents. Universities and Schools of Social Work are organizing departments and courses for the training of leaders.

To the churches as to other leisure time agencies there is presented an unprecedented opportunity for significant service. Here is a means of character-education in essence old as the family, in its modern form able to utilize the latest insights of the social sciences, the cultural opportunities resident in art, music, drama, handicraft, story-telling, and writing, the study and appreciation

<sup>3</sup> The author, as Chairman of the New York Conference on Group Work, issued a call to leaders in Group Work throughout the nation to meet at Atlantic City, N. J., in connection with the annual meeting of the National Conference of Social Work, in May, 1936. It was there that steps were taken to organize the National Association for the Study of Group Work.

of nature, athletic sports and games, the domestic arts, the art of social fellowship and of social action, and last, but not least, the art of religion.

The church has suffered the slow attrition of its social strength. Here is an opportunity more fully and intelligently to participate in a great and timely social movement. And if its strategy is wise and its restraint effective, it can do so in full accord with its own proper function, using the best of group work methods to teach a religion that is a way of life.

Modern religious education is already fully in sympathy with the psychological principles upon which the best group work is based. Through the Religious Education Association and the International Council of Religious Education, and through the more liberal denominational boards of education it is steadily improving the standards of the local churches. But progress has been slow. The ungraded lessons, the routine memorization of Bible verses as though like incantations they possessed some magic power of their own, volunteer teachers without adequate understanding of their task, and the absence of any effort to extend the religious educational process into week-day class-club activities—these remain characteristic of the vast majority of churches. Furthermore, the leaders in the movement are but just beginning to see the wider sociological implications of their endeavor. Very slowly the formal lesson period is giving place to the honest discussion of the problems and issues of present and vital importance to class members and the Bible is being used less as a series of divine injunctions to be blindly obeyed, more as a great source-book of religious experience and insight, its ancient wisdom to be measured alongside of modern knowledge and tested by the complex problems of modern society.

For a religion of final and dogmatic authority is being substituted a religion of intelligence. Real decisions are being made in the presence of real issues and the value of the Christian way of life is being proved in practice. But this cannot happen unless the teacher knows and shares in the life of the group. There is no other way to avoid the lip-service of Sunday school answers to issues largely hypothetical and unreal.

The church that learned fully and adequately to use the methods

of group work would, as suggested, insist upon a sufficient share of the leisure of its young people to give them, under trained leaders, the experience of a group life in which Christian brotherhood might in some measure be practiced. Such leaders must, like Jesus himself, have so fundamental a respect for human personality as to be unwilling to dominate and to coerce. They must recognize that religion to be understood must be experienced and so allow and appreciate and encourage every sincere though fumbling effort at corporate worship.

If religion is indeed a way of life, then the life motivated by religion, the life responsive to the divine in nature and in man has quality and flavor which distinguish it. The religious education of youth cannot be secured by rote and formula. It demands the fellowship in love and understanding of some older person whose life bears witness to his faith. Youth must be given room to think its own thoughts in sincerity, room to make its own decisions and its own mistakes. Yet youth needs above all else the companionship in real and vital experience which the wise and faithful teacher, leader and friend can offer.

Group work through the churches has its handicaps. In most communities the religion of denominationalism stands as a barrier between friends. Only the non-denominational or inter-denominational church in a relatively homogeneous community can escape the divisiveness which creedal loyalties elsewhere inevitably introduce. It is both ludicrous and regrettable that playmates and neighbors should be urged by their respective churches to form social clubs which for religious reasons shut each other out. So long as the churches of God exalt their private knowledge of what is the one and only road to salvation, so long as they deny the obvious fact that there are many roads all leading toward the one God, they must be satisfied with the social ineffectualness which mutual hostility produces.

The church that made adequate use of group work methods would seek at the outset to be fully coöperative with other churches and community agencies, expecting to have its own rights and duties honored in the process. It would apply the principle of shared experience in fellowship to all of its institutional life, including its Sunday services. Its own organizational structure



would be thoroughly democratic, not authoritarian. Boards and committees truly representative of the entire membership, both male and female, both young and old, would really function to determine its policies and to direct its activities. It would no longer deserve the jibe—"an institution run by men for women and children." The task of making the church more useful and more meaningful would be itself a principal means of the religious education of the members. The minister who dominates his church, who feels that he has failed unless his every plan is followed is not an educator but a dictator.

Adult groups, not casually called together, but strongly united by shared interests and needs would meet with frequency and regularity. What authoritarianism takes for granted and commands acceptance of, this church would make the basis of honest inquiry and discussion. It would seek through the organized sharing of experience and religious insight to discover what in fact religion had to offer toward the solution of life's real and urgent problems. This does not at all imply that there is no place for the impartation of knowledge and of opinion. Nor does it infer that these should be given only in cold objectivity. What we really know and think should be important to us, so important that we are fervent in sharing it. Emotion is basic to life and to religion.<sup>4</sup> But the preacher who, Sunday after Sunday, builds his own bias into his congregation is not fair to their intellects. If he makes the common mistake of assuming that he is successful in the measure to which, in the heat of oratory, he welds shut the doors of their minds against ideas divergent from his own, he evidences an unchristian disrespect for personality. It is in shared knowledge, opinion and experience directed toward the solution of real problems that Christian fellowship is nourished.

The corporate worship of God would fit naturally into such a system. Any group seriously attempting to apply the ethics of Jesus to daily living would need that sense of divine reinforcement which worship may give. In Scripture, in the religious wisdom of saints and prophets, in one another's insights, in meditation and in prayer they would seek knowledge of God's Will.

<sup>4</sup>*Vide*, Denison, J. H., *Emotion as the Basis of Civilization* (N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928).

Nor would they neglect to study the hard facts and realities of each situation they confronted, turning to scientist and scholar for understanding, to the social strategist for skill, to modern inventions, such as press and radio and motion picture, for the tools with which to accomplish the ends agreed upon. But for all this they would find incentive and courage in communion with God.

We have said that the church as an institution cannot without majority vote of its members commit itself upon social issues. But the democratic church, convinced of the value of group action, within the larger group can and should allow and encourage social opinion and social action by minorities. The religious fellowship that cannot tolerate disagreement with the majority opinion upon matters of vital concern has no valid claim to democracy or freedom. The bond of fellowship should consist of shared convictions as to the nature of God and of men's responsibility to do His Will, of shared interest in attaining a closer communion with Him, and a clearer understanding of His purposes. That bond should be strong enough to preserve fellowship and mutual regard in spite of differences of opinion upon matters of less central religious importance.<sup>5</sup>

The process whereby church groups now endorse social legislation is fundamentally at fault both administratively and educationally. The expression of corporate opinion upon some vital social issue should not be sought in the same offhand manner in which matters of administrative routine are put to vote. Denominational action on such issues should be the outcome of careful thinking and measured judgment. The contemplation of such action should be the opportunity and occasion for the creation of local study groups, perhaps church meetings in forum and discussion. And the action taken by the inter-church body and the reasons given for and against it should be reported back to the local church which might then express by vote its corporate judgment. If the local churches are indifferent to such efforts to secure intelligent participation in the community's life, then, obviously, there is no sound basis for the attempt to commit their denomination upon the issue. And, if made, the commitment will under the circum-

<sup>5</sup> Cf., Johnson, F. Ernest, *The Church and Society* (N. Y., Abingdon Press, 1935).

stances be meaningless, an empty gesture discrediting the churches in the eyes of realistic politicians and of earnest workers for enlightened reform.

Until and unless the churches are willing to set up a machinery adequate to the handling of matters of this sort, until and unless they see the educational and social implications involved, they would do better to leave them alone. Surely they have no right to implicate in their decisions large numbers of their members who have had no knowledge of the decisions reached or are out of sympathy with them.

Wherever opinions are expressed and sides taken on social and political issues by Protestant church groups it should be made clear whether that action is a corporate judgment or not. If, as is generally the case, it represents only the opinion of a small group of members or of self-styled leaders without followers as to the points at issue, that fact should be frankly stated in the interests of the public and of the church fellowship otherwise violated by these eager "reformers." An illustration of organized action on the part of a denomination is the economic plebiscite undertaken by the Congregational and Christian Council for Social Action at the request of the General Council of the Congregational and Christian Churches in June, 1936, to be completed by June, 1938. "The purpose of the plebiscite would be to stimulate thought and study on economic issues and to discover the mind of the churches as an aid in determining future programs and actions in these areas." The areas of inquiry cover labor unions, subsidies to farmers, social security, finance, government ownership, freedom of business, and coöperatives. The church has the right and the duty to make known what it believes to be the Will of God in these and similar matters of public concern. Individual Christians have the same obligation. Both have a further obligation—the church to create a machinery whereby corporate opinion may be intelligently formed and honestly expressed, individual Christians to avoid giving the impression that they speak for their entire fellowship when that is not the case.

Yet must we stress the necessity of providing for and encouraging the social action of minority groups where that action is based upon sincere effort to find and to do the right. That church is

in a sorry plight which finds it necessary within its own membership to deny the civil liberties guaranteed by the national Constitution. Only such action as is false to the shared beliefs upon which the fellowship is based can provide just cause for expulsion or excommunication.

Clearly the same principles apply in the field of social action by groups within the church as in the field of religious education. Religion is a way of life. To deny to Christians the opportunity of testing their convictions through practice is to emasculate the church. Christians, individually and in groups, have the right and duty as Christians to give support to every effort that seems to them to promise enrichment of life in the nearer approach to brotherhood.

The church as an institution has not yet reached majority agreement upon the issue of war as a means of settling disputes between nations, races and classes. But the church should not hesitate to allow those who believe in war and those who condemn it, freely to express their judgments. On the other hand the Society of Friends has made of non-violence an article of its creed. Therefore it would be fully justified in removing from its fellowship any who might come to advocate the use of violence to the destruction of life in the interests of nation or class.

Group work in church or in secular institution which restricts its activities to the satisfaction of selfish and often petty interests and desires loses a chief educational opportunity and limits greatly its social significance. It is such egotistic and ingrown groups which become cliques and forget the church in serving themselves. Such attitudes are a menace and anti-social. In the church, group work thus restricted fails most completely. For it loses the opportunity to bring the ethical values and the spiritual resources of religion into contact with life and it loses the chance thus to bring the nominal Christian and the Christian in training to see and to know that religion is not lip-service, is more than ritual in a building sacred and withdrawn. It is rather a communion with a God so powerful in love and righteousness that to know Him even a little is to be constrained to do His Will.

## CHAPTER XX

### The Church and the Methods of Self-Study

IN CLARKSVILLE, ARKANSAS, a church has recently been organized which proudly calls itself "The Non-Progressive Christian Church." Doubtless its favorite hymn is "Thy Church unchanged hath ever stood." Though we may laugh, there is something impressive about a dignity so static. No good Catholic would laugh. The church is an institution built to divine plan and for eternity. Why should it change?

We have already noted with some disfavor organized religion's hostility to the implication that it needs changing or that the social scientist can by his material measurements lay hold upon spiritual realities.<sup>1</sup> We are sure that self-knowledge produces change that is salutary.

Our study has convinced us that in superficial ways the church has changed though not in its basic functioning save that in a large number of denominations it has wrongly shifted its major emphasis from a God-centered worship to a man-centered social dogmatism. And we have become increasingly sure that if the church is to regain its lost prestige it must rouse itself to make the fact of God more real to the lives of men through the exaltation of worship and the use of modern scientific knowledge and method both in the natural and the social sciences.

In our discussion of the church as a religious educational institution we have said that to be effectual the church must master the realities, the hard facts of the social situations it confronts and the strategy by which that knowledge might be used. It must analyze itself and its community to find answers to three very pertinent questions:—In the light of its own aims, traditions and experience and of the community's needs:—1. What that the church is now doing should it continue to do? 2. What that it is

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, pp. 3-5.

now doing should it cease to do? 3. What that it is not now doing should it do?

Fortunately there are among the publications of the Institute of Social and Religious Research four separate works dealing with this subject, three having to do with the rural church, one with the city church.<sup>2</sup> These make unnecessary any detailed discussion of methods, record forms and the like. Instead we offer certain suggestions of our own as to the purpose and significance of such studies especially as they relate to the religious educational task of the church.<sup>3</sup>

It has been pointed out in an earlier chapter that many churches in broadening their programs and equipment have been guided less by a careful study of their congregation's needs than by a desire more successfully to compete with other churches or agencies in the community. As a result many communities have more gymnasiums, club-rooms and games rooms than are needed in the areas in which they are located. Imitation through competition is not an adequate or intelligent basis for community service.

The church survey should precede any plan for the extensive development of equipment or of program. Likewise when a church is confronted with the necessity of moving, the choice of a new location and the drawing of plans for the new structure should be the result of careful study. Our cities are littered with expensive monuments to the stupidity of church building committees who failed to discover the quite unmistakable signs of an unfavorable population trend not many city blocks removed from the chosen site and soon destined to envelop it. Transit facilities present and projected, the presence or absence of other churches and leisure time institutions, the places of residence of present and potential

<sup>2</sup> Brunner, Edmund de S., *Surveying Your Community, A Handbook of Method for the Rural Church* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1925); Morse, Hermann N., *The Social Survey in Town and Country Areas* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1924); Fry, C. Luther, *Diagnosing the Rural Church* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1924); Douglass, H. Paul, *How to Study the City Church* (N. Y., Harper and Bros., 1928).

<sup>3</sup> The author was for a time Director of the Department of Surveys of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A. *Vide*, Swift, Arthur L., Jr., *The Survey of the Y.M.C.A. in the City of New York* (N. Y., Association Press, 1927). In 1937-38 he directed for the Community Chest of Rochester, N. Y., a survey of its character-building agencies.

members and their proportions in the total population of the area, social criteria as to land values, rentals, health, crime and delinquency, all these and other factors need careful study if the church is to be strategically located, the often considerable funds well and wisely invested in the new structure. A newly built church in New York City failed to make any thorough study of the probable number and variety of the demands of the community upon it for services and though admirably located, of unusual size, and planned with skill and ingenuity, it found itself, before the end of its first year, in certain essential respects over-crowded and inadequately equipped,—and unable fully to remedy the error.

These are, however, only the more obvious uses of such surveys, uses to which for many years business and manufacturing concerns have had recourse. Not alone the church confronting basic changes in building, program, or neighborhood, but also the average church doing with average effectiveness its usual work, at intervals sorely needs to reappraise itself and its community. The dead hand of the past is heavier upon the average church than upon any other type of social institution. The sanction of tradition is inordinately strong. The sense of being engaged in the work of the Lord deadens all suspicion that in certain essential respects that work may be poor or altogether mistaken.

Even the coming of a new minister often proves an inadequate stimulus to more effective activity. His task is to tend the machinery that he inherits, to keep the wheels revolving, not to discover why they revolve or whether certain of them should revolve at all. Too often both leader and congregation sink into the deep rut of habit and are content to remain there. Only when community change forces adaptation is any new thing done. Even then it is likely to follow the path of least resistance.

The minister who, himself alert, confronts a church lethargic with pious tradition will find in the survey an effective implement of intelligent change. For at its best the survey is more than an objective study of social facts. It is an educational enterprise. There is no better way to rouse an indifferent constituency, no better way to fire the ardors of a lukewarm laity than to launch them upon a study of their church to discover in what ways it may more effectually serve the cause of Christ in its community.

Likewise for the democratically inclined minister whose predecessor was a benign autocrat, the survey is an essential aid in escaping the curse of that stereotype.

Of course education is a process and takes time. The mere announcement of such an undertaking will rouse more of antagonism than of approval. The way must be tactfully and painstakingly prepared—the idea first thoroughly comprehended by the minister himself then sold by him to a select few and by them to others. Emphasis must be placed not upon present weaknesses and failures but rather upon the inherent strength and loyalty of the organization and its potential abilities for even greater service. In some instances this will border on hypocrisy and a frank confession of institutional inadequacy will be both more honest and more effective. But if the survey is to serve its dual function of investigation and of arousal it must be launched by a sincerely interested constituency, not by the fiat of a leader.

Often a complete study, seeking answers to all three of the questions we have enumerated in respect to all of the church's activities seems too large an undertaking. It is then wisest to begin and perhaps to end with the study of some one phase of activity, such as the Sunday school,<sup>4</sup> and commanding the coöperation of only the more actively involved members of the church.

But whether it be complete or partial, it must be thorough so far as it goes. The essential factors in a really significant self-study are those operative in any really scientific investigation. Thoroughness implies a willingness to consider all relevant facts, however unsavory, and the scientist's respect for facts as facts. It implies persistence and perseverance, care and accuracy in securing and in recording these facts. Objectivity, a second essential, means to keep one's private interests and predilections from warping the survey process, not always easy since personalities are inevitably involved. Intelligent and logical reasoning from facts to conclusions and recommendations is a third essential. And the list might be extended to resemble closely that of the qualities requisite to the natural scientist, as earlier enumerated.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Vide*, Swift, A. L. Jr., "Surveying" in *Religious Education*, Vol. XXII, No. 5, May 1927.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide*, pp. 5-6.



Indeed, a properly conducted survey is an excellent teacher of the fundamental moralities. But it is more than that. It affords new insights upon old tasks, charges with new meaning activities which through long use have become merely routine and formal. And it inaugurates changes which otherwise might never have been made and in an atmosphere of expectancy and of enthusiasm as contrasted with the concealed or open hostility which so often greets innovations which are arbitrarily introduced.

Properly managed, it serves another function as well. It stimulates interest in and sensitivity to community needs, and brings a new awareness of the services of other churches and leisure time agencies. It helps to overcome institutional egotism and self-centeredness. For no self-survey is at all adequate which fails to consider unreached groups and unmet needs within the reasonable scope of the church's functioning. In other words the survey to be adequate must do more than evaluate what now is being done, must do more than merely to suggest ways and means of doing the customary things more efficiently.

And this involves more than the discovery of new or unmet needs in the church's constituency. It involves an understanding of what have been and remain the real functions of the church as one among a large number of social agencies. For example, the survey may discover a need for both social and religious work among a group of virtually unchurched Catholics in the neighborhood. Immediately the issue will arise, is this church the proper agency to meet those needs. We have expressed the opinion that usually it decidedly is not. That, and the contrary opinion will under the circumstances doubtless be expressed and fully discussed. The primary purpose of the church, its tradition, its qualifications by virtue of past experience, of present or potential equipment and leadership, and the presence or absence in the community of other agencies such as the Catholic Church, a community center or charity organization society,—all these are factors which must be given due consideration. Thus in the effort better to understand and manage itself, the church learns better to understand and to cooperate with others.

Such a survey of an average church, contrary to general opinion, does not require a high degree of specialized knowledge. It is

applied common sense under control of sincere and honest effort to be fair and impartial. And, as indicated, there are books available which supply the necessary technical information.

We have had a great deal to say about the stubborn indifference of the church to social change. The picture we have drawn is far from pleasing. The survey, a technique of the social sciences, is offered as one effective means of rousing the church to intelligent action, of educating it to a new awareness of itself and of its opportunities, of helping it to discover for itself how without injustice to its primary purpose and function, it may in some measure be reestablished as a more fully recognized and respected institution.

## CHAPTER XXI

### The Churches and Psychiatry. Conclusion

WE HAVE INDICATED that both the natural and the social sciences which have modified the social and intellectual environment to the disfavor of the churches, have at the same time presented them with new opportunities and resources—as for example a more intelligent constituency, instruments such as the talking moving picture, and the radio, and methods such as that of group work and of the survey. We have insisted that in the right understanding and use of these and similar opportunities and resources and in full accord with its basic purpose and tradition, lies the church's chance and challenge.

We cannot conclude, however, without reference to another method, evolved by medicine and psychology, which is of paramount significance to the church as furthering one of its long recognized objectives, the pastoral ministry.

From earliest times the Christian church, following a more ancient example, has concerned itself not alone with the eternal salvation of souls but as well with the healing of bodies and minds. Anointing with oil, prayer and the laying on of hands in curing the sick, have persisted side by side with the use of sacred names and symbols, relics, herbs, and drugs in the exorcism of evil spirits: “. . . however obstinate those evil Spirits may be, however restive to the injunctions of the Exorcist who bids them leave the body they possess, yet, at the mere utterance of the most holy name of Jesus or Mary, or of some verse of Holy Writ, at the mere imposition of relics, especially of a piece of the wood of the Holy Cross, or the sight of the holy images, they roar at the mouth of the possessed person, they gnash, shake, quiver, and display fright and awe.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sinistrari of Ameno, the Rev. Father, *Demoniality*. Published from the original Latin Ms. of the 17th century (Paris, Isidore Liseux, 1879), pp. 36-7.

Both faith healing and exorcism continue to be practiced by the Christian churches.<sup>2</sup> But a more recent method of dealing with the mentally ill, a method based on quite different assumptions, has come into wide practice. Psychiatry has in a measure usurped the place of the confessional and the pastor's private office.

Within the church itself it has not received a wide acceptance. As is true of other efforts to modify existing church practice to conform to new insights and opportunities, the response varies according to the creed and tradition of each ecclesiastical group. Those who are so deeply impressed with man's sinfulness as contrasted with God's goodness as to be convinced that salvation is from God alone, cannot so readily adopt or adapt the basic assumptions and practices of psychiatry to their uses. If salvation comes only by God's intervention, man's effort to save himself by recourse to any scientific method whatsoever must be largely futile. None the less it is conceivable that these efforts to uncover the sources of personal difficulties might become an occasion for such intervention, especially if prayer and contrition were a part of the process.

But in still another respect theology influences the response made. Both in the confessional and authoritarian churches and in those of the freer tradition individual error is viewed as sin, an act of disloyalty to God. In confession the opportunity is given to restore man to his proper relationship if he be truly penitent and willing to do penance and when possible make restitution. The confessional thus serves as a means of relaxing the strain and tension produced by the sense of sin and is in many respects psychologically of great value. The psychiatric approach to behavior difficulties, rather than fixing blame or requiring punishment, assumes the inherent desire of folk to live harmoniously and richly, and views the wrong or unsatisfying behavior as symptomatic of some type of mental illness.

Psychological research and clinical case studies have enormously broadened the knowledge of the mechanisms and springs of behavior. It is true that this new "science" exhibits many contra-

<sup>2</sup> *Vide*, Worcester, Elwood, and McComb, Samuel, *Body, Mind and Spirit* (N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), pp. 93-106.

dictory theories and schools, notably those of Freud, Adler, Rank, and Jung, and that it has many practitioners who both exploit and degrade it. But, none the less, it is sound at heart, already one of the major contributions of social science, and potentially a most useful servant of the church.

Of course, it has met a like opposition from organized religion to that which psychology earlier encountered. The old story repeats itself with every scientific advance which threatens ancient prerogatives. And beyond doubt the church has cause to fear a method of dealing with the problems of unhappy and ill-adjusted individuals which more often than not frankly excludes religion save as a symptom of maladjustment or even a contributing cause of it.<sup>3</sup> Again, it seems at first glance an instance of scientific knowledge supplanting the guess-work of religion. But again it is proving that science cannot supplant religion because man cannot escape God.

Many of the leading psychiatrists are frankly admitting that religion has a definite function to fulfill in the process. Psychiatry can often give the troubled individual release from infantile conflicts and repressions, can give him a command of himself, but it fails again and again to give the freed individual any constructive plan or any energizing motive for the use of his new freedom. In a coldly scientific sense, and without implication as to faith's objective validity, psychiatrists are admitting that an individual remains maladjusted until he has found some working relationship to his Universe. They find the trained minister particularly helpful in dealing with cases in which religious belief has been a strong and early factor and with cases in which the illness finds expression in intense and often grotesque religious phantasies, obsessions or doubts.

But from the viewpoint of the church, psychiatry is significant for other and more pressing reasons. The minister in fulfilling his pastoral office, comes inevitably into association with folk vari-

<sup>3</sup> *Vide*, Jung, C. G., *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (N. Y., Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1933); also

Wittels, Fritz, "Psychoanalysis and Religion" in *Religion Today*, A. L. Swift, Jr., Ed., Chapter VII.

ously afflicted with mental and emotional disorders. The great majority of these are the result of some conflict between antithetical desires, a conflict which has been consciously or unconsciously repressed in an ineffectual effort to be rid of it. Ineffectual because the repressed desire forces itself into overt expression in some disguised but troublesome form. Unless the conflict is of long standing and of the sort which intimately and intricately affects a large part of the emotional life, it is possible with the possession of such knowledge as even a busy minister may acquire, to help the individual to discover for himself the source of his difficulty and by mature and intelligent choice between the warring alternatives, to resolve the conflict.

In less technical terms, it might be said that the task of the minister as pastor involves the necessity of helping people to face the realities of their own emotional lives, to see them objectively and clearly and to adjust them to one another sufficiently to permit purposeful and consistent action. But this involves a conscious choice between conflicting values and a unification of life in terms of some standard. Here the minister who has in his own life experienced the saving grace of God, who has found in Jesus the personification of the best life has to offer, can bring the sufferer in contrition and in hope to the Source of all power and healing, confident that God will give pardon and strength and direction beyond anything that man alone can give to man. Always it has been true and it remains true that the reality of God is nowhere more thrillingly demonstrated than in the broken and disordered life regenerated and made whole.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately there are in every parish a number of folk whose condition is more serious—so serious, indeed, that amateur efforts at remedy, however well-motivated, do more harm than good. Such conditions have their symptoms, as a rule, though not always, recognizable. Ministers are bound to meet such folk and unless reasonably well-informed are prone to the mistake of attempting a remedy. Beyond question in such cases they run grave risk of doing irreparable harm. In not a few instances they en-

<sup>4</sup> Cf., Bonnell, John Sutherland, "The Cure of Souls," in *Religion in Life*, Vol. VII, No. 1, Winter Number 1938 (N. Y., Abingdon Press), pp. 106-117.

danger their own lives and those of others. Their well-meaning efforts are as inexcusable as those of the kindly-intentioned friend who would perform an appendectomy with a pocket knife.

It is not the business of a minister or church worker to practice psychiatry. It is his business to be sufficiently well informed in this field to deal with the large variety of personal problems which do not require professional handling, and to recognize those which do.

No brief statement of the relation of the church to this new science of helping others to solve their personal problems can do more than state the challenge and indicate its general nature and significance. Fortunately, as in the field of surveys, good books are available<sup>5</sup> and even in the smaller communities, adequately trained specialists are somewhere within reach.<sup>6</sup> The Elliotts in their book on this subject analyze it in terms of the kinds of difficulties under which people suffer and of the kinds of social areas which create these sufferings and difficulties. The kinds of people considered are those who have trouble in fully growing up, physically, mentally or emotionally, those with warped and dwarfed personalities, those who habitually evade responsibility, those who are the victims of strong fears and prejudices, and those who lack the power of intelligent self-direction.

The first of the three major social areas which create these difficulties is the area of conflict and misunderstanding between parents and children. Some parents allow their love of their children to lead them to an over-zealous protection which creates an unreal world for them, a world which fails to prepare them to meet later unavoidable exigencies of life. Parental love may also so overshadow a child as to stunt his growth into maturity. It may make him so dependent upon parental love and direction that he is even in adult life incapable of forming emotional attachments outside the home and of thinking and acting as a mature

<sup>5</sup> *Vide*, Elliott, Harrison S., and Elliott, Grace L., *Solving Personal Problems, A Counseling Manual* (N. Y., Henry Holt & Co., 1936), for an admirable and non-technical presentation and an excellent classified bibliography. Also Cabot, Richard C. and Dicks, Russell L., *The Art of Ministering to the Sick* (N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1936).

<sup>6</sup> The National Committee for Mental Hygiene, 50 West 50th Street, New York City, will upon request provide a list of psychiatrists and of psychiatric clinics in any area of the United States.

and independent person. At the other extreme the home may fail to afford the child that sense of security in the affection of his parents which is essential to normal growth. The unwanted child, the child in a home divided by incessant conflict or broken by divorce, the child of dissolute and irresponsible parents, these all are in grave danger of developing in early or in later life, serious emotional difficulties.

Another of the areas prolific of personal problems is that of sex and marriage. The unnatural restraints which modern civilization places upon the expression of sexual desire make emotional disturbance almost inevitable. Economic factors unduly delay marriage. Necessary social laws hamper the satisfactory expression of sex outside of the marriage relation. And, to complicate and confuse the situation further, life is beset by publications, advertising displays, theatrical and motion picture performances and other legal and illegal commercialized exploitations of the sexual urge. The prudery which, encouraged by the churches, so long stood between youth and reliable information about sex, making the whole subject seem too unclean for frankness, is at length slowly yielding to reason and intelligence.<sup>7</sup> Prudery, says Gallichan, is "the phenomenon of exaggerated sexual shame, and fear of the human body, . . . a menace . . . to morality, art, social culture, health, and mental sanity."<sup>8</sup>

A third area productive of personal problems is that which concerns vocation. It is the rare and fortunate individual who succeeds in finding a means of earning a living which completely satisfies and pleases him. Our industrialized civilization has limited the opportunity for creative expression through work and vastly increased routine and drudgery. But worse than such labor is the inability to find employment at all. Aside from these too prevalent conditions there is always need in every community of intelligent vocational guidance. This requires both a knowledge of the individual concerned, his background, education, experience, interests, abilities and aptitudes, and a practical acquaintance with the nature, requirements and opportunities of the vocations under

<sup>7</sup> *Vide*, Gallichan, Walter M., *The Poison of Prudery* (London, T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 1929).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.



consideration and of the training and preparation each may require. There are many "square pegs in round holes," many people who need help in changing their vocation or in better adapting themselves to it. Lacking such help they know the bitterness of frustration, the sense of personal inadequacy which breeds self-doubt and cynicism.

In each of these areas the minister or church worker can do much to make his guidance more adequate. True, prayer is often of great help in resolving a difficulty. Homilies upon duties to parents, the virtue of chastity and the significance of humble toil are by contrast less than helpful. If organized religion is to regain something of its lost significance for life, it must avail itself of the opportunities here presented. For in the solution of such problems as these the pattern of individual and social life is shaped. In the choices which must be made the Christian ethic has a contribution to offer. It is in these real and inescapable situations and issues that religion belongs if it is a way of life. "The goal of all counseling is to help an individual find an adequate personal religion and the counseling process is not complete until this end has been attained."<sup>9</sup>

Guidance of this sort is often viewed as concerning itself with individuals rather than with society. But clearly the distinction is false. Individual problems arise out of social situations. The church that sincerely and intelligently interests itself in personal problems like these, cannot be blind to the faults of the society which creates them. Moreover in the program of a church democratically organized on the basis of active groups, it will be found that these groups in intimate and friendly relation with their leaders, afford the leaders unexampled opportunity to become the guides and counselors of the individuals in their groups.

So in the church which responds to the several suggestions this book has offered, it will be found that these suggestions are consistent one with another and mutually reinforcing. Around the central fact of communion and worship is established an educational program through organized self-governing groups, seeking enrichment of life and social self-realization. In their mutual

<sup>9</sup> Elliott and Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

efforts better to know God and better to serve mankind they will try better to understand their community's needs and better to adapt their church to them. As individuals they will turn with new confidence to minister and other leaders because they are intelligent and friendly counselors, not autocrats and dictators. A church so reconstructed and so led need not fear the future.

The church now in a measure overwhelmed by the magnitude and violence of social change, and taking refuge in the perpetuation of a dead tradition, will have become again a pioneer and leader. No longer obsessed by the necessity of winning the world by worldly means, the church, staunch in its central purpose to mediate between man and God, outspoken in its witness to the reality of God, will seize and hold in the name of the compassionate Christ, these new frontiers of religion.

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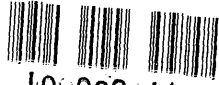
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